

A black and white portrait of Daniel Rowland, a man with long, light-colored hair, wearing a dark coat and a white cravat. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right.

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the sermons of

**Daniel
Rowland**

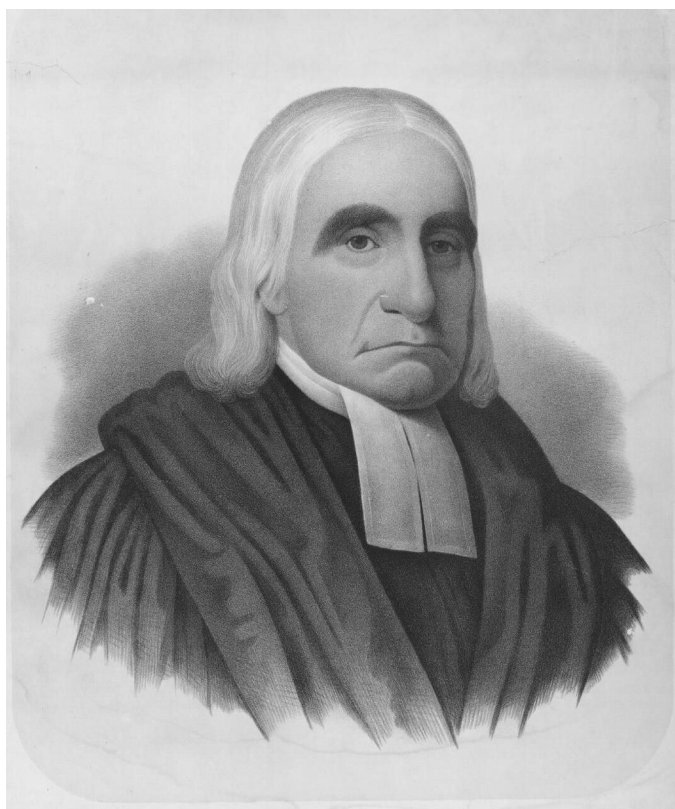
The Sermons of Daniel Rowland

Nathan Hoover

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Introduction

THE BREATH OF GOD IN THE SOUL OF A MAN.

Even those of us who have lived long enough to have lived through the last major revival in the west, The Jesus People Movement (approximately 1967-1975), have no conception of the vast spiritual crater The Evangelical Awakening left in the western world. The First Great Awakening as it is remembered in the United States began with several key figures all experiencing deep conversion and unction for preaching at once. Among these were the Holy Club at Oxford College in England (George Whitefield, and John and Charles Wesley) as well as Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland in Wales. Meanwhile Jonathan Edwards was experiencing periodic winds of conversion at his pastorate in Northampton, Massachusetts in the Colonies.

While I have no hesitation to blow the trumpet of these amazing figures whose sweat, toil, and tongue changed the course of eternal history, there is only one hero. This season of the Church was special because God decided to act. As he always does, he uses men.

Introduction

God's presence moved souls from darkness to light, slumber to dread, by the sermons you have at hand. The preacher was Daniel Rowland.

I came across these sermons by way of someone I knew in seminary who had gone to a conference and met someone who transcribed these ancient homilies by Daniel Rowland.

If you want to know more, I recommend you pick up *Puritans, Their Origins and Successors*, by D. Martin Lloyd Jones who has a mini-biography on Rowland and Harris. Also of interest would be the two volume set of *Calvinistic Methodist Fathers* by Banner of Truth.

But in all likelihood, if you are here, you already know of Rowland and are just wanting to dive deeper. If that's the case, please, enjoy the light evident in these expositions.

Nate Hoover

JESUS PEOPLE SF

St. Pete.

Chapter 1

“Glad tidings of great joy.”

Sermon 1

Glad tidings of great joy.

— Matthew 2:8-9

“**A**ND he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo! the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.”

When the Savior of men was born into the world, the glad tidings of His birth were first announced to poor shepherds, “abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night.” This is not the manner of men. They generally bestow their best things upon the greatest among them—upon kings and princes of the earth. They give poor things to the poor—such things as would not be acceptable to others. But Jesus Christ, the Pearl of great price—“the righteousness which looked down from

heaven, and the truth which sprang from the earth," was first made known to men of low estate, whereby we are taught that no condition, however humble, poor, and low, is beneath God's notice, or is excluded, on that account, from sharing in the blessings of Christ. This, which subdues the pride of the high and lofty, teaches us that God communicates His grace to the humble and low. Yet, lest men of low estate should establish an exclusive right to Him, He was made manifest to the wise men from the East, whose treasures certainly proved them to be very rich, thus giving a full evidence of His readiness to save all ranks, and omit no degrees amongst the human race. He is the "tree that was in the midst of the garden"—the centre of grace which diffuses its influences everywhere around. As the tree of life, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations, is said to be "in the midst of the street," so is Jesus in the midst of His Church, communicating His grace to all, the poor as well as the rich, that all may become partakers of a divine nature. This should make all unite together in one common brotherhood, for neither the one nor the other can be saved, but through the merits of Jesus Christ. The very offering which the poor were enjoined to offer by the law of Moses, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons"—which was the sacrifice of the Virgin Mary and her espoused husband when the Child Jesus was presented in the temple—amply proves their poverty. Yet it pleased the Prince of Glory to assume this form of poverty, that, through His poverty, many might be made rich. Let not the rich despise the poor, for He who was once contemptuously styled the carpenter's son, shall ere long be their eternal judge, and Will take from them every talent not employed in his service. Let them remember that money can never re,

deem a single soul, or procure the least favor from an offended God. Our blessed Savior has done more for us, by His poverty, than a thousand worlds can do for us by their treasures. "He has washed us from our sins in His own blood," and "made us kings and priests unto God."

Having before alluded to the wise men from the East, let us remember that the narrative is more immediately connected with them, and on this occasion more immediately interesting to us. The shepherds were Jews; the wise men were Gentiles. These were early intimations, that the prophecies foretold—that "all the nations of the earth be blessed —would soon be realized, that unto Him should the gathering of the people be," and that God should enlarge Japheth, and dwell in the tents of Shem. The delivering of the law on Mount Sinai, in Arabia, a Gentile land; the building of the temple on the threshing floor of Araunah, a Gentile ground, and the chief superintendence of the erection entrusted to Hiram, a Gentile by birth;—all very clearly show that the salvation which was originally confined to the Jews, should become also the inheritance of the Gentiles. These wise men were not only Gentiles, but doubtless men who feared God. The great distance did not debar them from undertaking the journey, nor did their great wealth render them careless about the salvation of their souls. This should instruct us that the wise and opulent have as much need of Jesus Christ as the ignorant and indigent. High and low must equally come to Him for salvation, for "there is no other name (given amongst men whereby they can be saved." Princes, . as well as their subjects, must go in through the same gate, or both perish without. The poor shepherds from the field, and the wise men from the East, came to pay their homage to Him who is the Prince of Peace and

the friend of sinners. Whatever be your condition—whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned—go, and search diligently for Him—lay hold on His righteousness and strength, and be ye saved through His mediation and merits. Here rich and poor meet together; both must have recourse to the same sacrifice. Under the law it was said, “the rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when they give an offering to the Lord to make an atonement for their souls.” There were other offerings in which the rich were required to give more than the poor, but in this—their daily offering—the amount was the same; the atoning sacrifice admitted neither increase nor decrease. This sacrifice was always the same, and to all persons it made no difference, a type—of Him who was the salvation of all men. “The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

I shall now consider whence the wise men came; where they came to; the end of their coming; the zeal and diligence in surmounting all difficulties; and the success wherewith it pleased God to crown their persevering researches; also the season of their coming. And may the Holy Spirit impress the truth of Christ coming upon our hearts, and be a guide to our souls, to lead us to our Savior!

I. Whence the wise men came?

They came from the East, a far distant country, and a journey not easy to undertake, but their coming was in accordance to the prophecies, which had foretold “that the Gentiles should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising.” God also himself had declared, “that many should come from the east, and from the west,

and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and that the Gospel was to be preached to them who were afar off, as well as to those who were nigh. Gentiles, as well as Jews, were to be gathered into one fold, under one shepherd; and, behold, the gathering begins, for bringing us nigh who were once afar off, for admitting us who were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel into a share of their privileges, and for making us who had no hope and without God in the world, partakers of the rich blessings of the Gospel,—for all these we should give Him eternal praise. All now may come unto Him, that they may receive forgiveness of sin through faith in His name.

The wise men coming from a far country should teach us to spare no pains to seek Jesus, that we may be also found in Him. Though we should spend and be spent, though obstacles be in the way, and weariness in our journey, yet, if we can but find Jesus, and lay hold on Him for our eternal life, our labour shall never be in vain. Every toil in the pursuit, and every effort in our search, if haply Christ be formed in our hearts, shall receive its due reward. Take heed lest the queen of the south should rise in judgment with this generation, and condemn them, because there is greater than Solomon here. Solomon was the wisest of men, but here is the Wisdom of God. Many who mind no distance, and regard no weather, to seek provision for the body, make no effort, and stir not a step, to seek salvation for their souls. They seek the bread that perisheth, but disregard the bread of life. It is sad to consider that these wise men—heathens in a distant country—should travel so many miles to seek Him who was born King of the Jews; whilst you, who call yourselves Christians, will not move or stir to seek the Saviour of your souls, who is the King of Glory. We show forth the

Lord Jesus, not as the wise men, lying in a manger, bleeding in the garden, or dying on the cross, but sitting in unclouded majesty on His lofty throne in glory. May God remove every veil from off your heart, that you may see Him as He is,—more excellent than His angels, who excel in might.

2. We consider the place where the wise men came to.

They came to Jerusalem, not by the direction of the star, but by the guidance of their own reasoning. They naturally supposed that He who was to be born King of the Jews would be best known in their chief city, Jerusalem. But here they found Him not. They had been guided by the light of nature, when they should have been led by the light of the Spirit. Reason is a great and noble gift; it achieves great ends, and does that which is right, but it will never come to seek Jesus except drawn by the grace of God. “No man,” saith our blessed Savior, “can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him.” So long as the wise men followed the star, they steered their course aright. When they listened to the voice of reason, they lost the light of heaven. If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. are blind by nature. Christ hath set up His Spirit to be our guide: may His light guide you through life, and at last bring you to your Savior’s presence, at whose right hand there are joys for evermore.

3. Our next inquiry is, What end the wise men had in view?

Their object was to seek Jesus, and see Him. The wish was natural. He is the desire of all nations. Of old the same feelings have been expressed. Abraham did earnestly desire to see His day. "If I have," said Moses, "found grace in thy sight, show me, I beseech thee, thy glory. We cannot see God and live." This is true, as He is God : but we may look upon the face of the Anointed of the Father and live—yea, live for ever. God sent forth His Son in the likeness of human flesh, and in Him our most earnest desire of seeing God may be fully realized. He is the express image of His person." God said, Let us make man in our image" that is, in the same image as He should afterwards appear in human form : and as He once made clay and applied it to the eyes of the blind man that He might see, even so He assumed human form, made of the dust of the ground, that He might be seen. Once to see Him, it is enough. Our souls are satisfied. We long to look upon no other object. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant to depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Let the worldly seek their gain; the covetous their wealth; and the libertine his pleasure; but seek ye Christ in your soul by faith. It was delightful to hear the angel say, "I know that ye seek Jesus." He seeks you. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Seek ye Him. As pants the hart for the cooling streams, so let your souls pant for the living God. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."

Seek ye Him, that ye may receive of His fulness, and grace for grace. No efforts would be spared to go and see an estate left us by another, —so "run that ye may obtain."

He is the great prize of your salvation; rest not until you gain possession of your inheritance.

See the efforts which the wise men made. They came to Jerusalem, but they were disappointed. Their efforts met with no success. The priests of the temple and scribes of the law could furnish no information. The council of the Sanhedrim, and their glorious city—“the joy of the whole earth”—could form no attraction when Jesus was not to be found. Where He was not, they could not remain. This teaches us, that neither the indifference of the learned, nor carelessness of our superiors, should ever furnish an excuse for our negligence. Dili(rent in our duties, striving in our efforts our eyes” should never cease to “wait upon the Lord our God.” Not for a day, nor for any particular time, but until He should have mercy upon us.” “Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry,” for “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” The example of the wise men leaving Jerusalem should teach us to bid adieu to every place where the favor of God is not to be found, and where the things of God are not known. As they withdrew themselves from the celebrated city of Jerusalem, when they could not find Jesus there, so should each of us, whatever may be our condition in life, withdraw from the tents of the ungodly and the seats of the wicked, however inviting their appearance, or alluring their temptations. Rest not in your duties, nor place any confidence in your performances. Go on to seek the Lord until He is formed in your souls, and with a single eye look to Jesus as your hope of glory, Seek Him in His temples here below, that you may dwell with Him for ever in His tabernacle above.

Mark the success wherewith the Lord was pleased to crown the efforts of the wise men. Though they had

received no instructions at Jerusalem touching the object of their mission, yet they had not gone far, “when, Lo! the star which they saw in the east went before them, and stood over where the young Child was.” Here we are encouraged to put ourselves entirely under the guidance of, God’s Spirit—to watch His motions, and quench not His strivings. The Lord will always accomplish that which He hath begun. Wherever He is the author of our faith, He is also the finisher. As we advance in the divine life, He unfolds the mystery of His grace. The stream may be small at its source, but it swells as it flows. Fresh springs flow in as we journey on. “To him who hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” God is ready to bless the efforts of His people, and quicken into life the work which the Spirit had begun in the soul.

4. We hasten now, in the last place, to make a few remarks on the time in which the wise men came.

It was when Herod was king. This reminds us that Christ’s kingdom was not of this world. He aspired not to Herod’s throne, and though truly a king, was not of Herod’s blood. Their inquiry was, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews;” and when He was asked, Art thou a king?” His answer was, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.” “His kingdom is not of this world.” Not a temporal, but a spiritual kingdom. This teaches us to moderate our wishes after earthly things—not to “receive honor one of another, but to covet that honor which cometh from God only.” It should be our aim, not to be great in this world, but useful in our generation—not to be distinguished by wealth and splendor, but

by meekness and lowliness of heart. Lazarus, covered with sores, was far dearer in the sight of God than the rich man in his power and glory. The hungry He fills with good things, the rich He sends empty away; the mighty He takes down from their seat, the humble He exalts many degrees.

It seems in accordance with God's will that He should not appear in His power, in His goodness, or in His might, until things have reached some extremity. He would not go to Bethany till "Lazarus had been dead four days." He would not go to His disciples, toiling all night, in danger, in the midst of the sea, until the fourth watch; so it was not His time to come into the world until the sceptre had departed from Judah, and matters reduced to great distress. He was to be the brother born for adversity. the wine was all spent, He magnifies the power of His might. When we have a father or a mother to provide for us, He often passes by, but "when father and mother forsake us, the Lord will take us up." He is the Father of the fatherless, and God of all mercy. He loves His people at all times, but peculiarly manifests that love in the hour of distress. We will now conclude by the following remarks. Behold God's goodness in directing His people. He sent an angel to preach the Gospel to the shepherds, and directed a star to guide the wise men to Jesus. Blessed be His name. His Word is not only a star to guide our path, but a lamp to guide our feet. Faithful ministers direct our course, and God's Holy Spirit leads us to all truth. May we all be subjects of His teaching, and under His guidance may be brought to the knowledge of Him whom to know is eternal life. Labour also to know whether we love the Lord Jesus Christ, Do we sing His glory with the angels, or publish the glad tidings with the shepherds, or

rejoice with the wise men, and glad that we have felt the power of His grace in our hearts ? Or are we, with Herod, troubled at the idea of His birth, and filled with anger at the mention of His name? These are tests. Do you exult in the prosperity of Christ's kingdom, or are you uneasy at its progress in the world? When religion comes near home, and offers to lay its restraints on our hearts—to injure our worldly interests, or endanger our personal care—do we rejoice, or are we troubled ? Let us not crucify the Lord of glory, but welcome Him to our souls. Let us not put Him to open shame by our sins, but magnify Him as the Prince of Peace, and establish His throne in our hearts.

Chapter 2

"Christ is all in all"

Sermon 2

Christ is all in all

— Colossians

3:11

*...therefore God, even thy God, hath
anointed thee with the oil of gladness,
above thy fellows.*

— Hebrews 1:9

By the phrase, "God, even thy God," we are to understand God the Father. Such expressions are often employed in Holy Scripture. "The Lord said unto my Lord;" and again, "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven."

By "the oil of gladness" is here meant the Holy Spirit. That this should be so, is prophesied in the Old Testament, and confirmed in the New. "The Spirit of the Lord

is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). Sometimes the operation of God's Holy Spirit is compared to water, which cleanses; at other times, to fire, which purifies; in this place, to oil, which softens the heart, and makes our yoke easy.

By "gladness" is to be understood the fruit of the Spirit, such as, "love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, and faith" (Galatians 5:22). It is a foretaste of greater things to come. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:23). "In thy presence there is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11). By "thy fellows" is signified all those true Christians who have been made kings and priests unto God, partakers of the same Spirit, recipients of the same joy; in nature the same, in degree less. He, having all fullness; they, only by measure. By His divine nature, He was equal with the Father. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man who is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." Again, by His human nature, He was truly man. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, so also himself likewise took part of the same." A wonderful union of blessed Trinity. God the Father had anointed thee, God the Son, "with the oil of gladness" - God the Holy Ghost - "above thy fellows". This is Christ's Church.

Let us here inquire:

1. What is meant by the anointing spoken of "God hath anointed thee."
2. The end for which our Lord was anointed.
3. The lesson it teaches, and the blessings we reap.

First consideration, what is meant by the anointing spoken of "God hath anointed thee."

Under the law the ceremony of anointing consisted of three essential: 1. Being set apart by God. 2. A meetness for the office. 3. Having holy oil actually poured on the head.

So our blessed Savior was set apart for the great work of redemption. He had been chosen from all eternity, by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," (Acts 2:23) to effect the salvation of man. He did not thrust Himself into the office as an usurper, but assumed it according to the express appointment of the Father. As no man should take the honor of the priesthood unto himself, except he who was called of God, as Aaron, so also Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high priest, but He who said unto Him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," also ordained Him to the office. He did not take it by force, but assumed its sacred functions in accordance to the Divine will. Christ himself thus said, "I am not come of myself, but He who sent me is true, whom you know not." In the same strain, soon after His death, St Peter lets "all the house of Israel know assuredly that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ." That He who was Christ the Lord should not undertake so important a charge, so great and necessary a work, as the salvation of lost souls, until duly commissioned of the Father, teaches

us to be cautious how we should engage in the like service, unless directed from the same source. In one place we read of a person who came to Christ, requesting Him "to divide the inheritance between him and his brother," and He said unto him, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider among you?" He could have discharged the office of a judge, as well as that of a physician; to decide cases of law as easy as to remove the disease of the body. But this was not His commission. No one could taunt Him, insolently asking, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us." He kept within His allotted sphere, and exceeded not the bounds of His own province. With a gentle reproof He condemns this spirit in others, saying, "What is that to thee, follow thou me" - cease to pry into other's concerns, be diligent in thine own calling. When a river gently glides along its wonted channels, its waters are clear and wholesome, but when it overflows its banks, it often commits great damages. Whilst we keep within the limits assigned us, we prosper and succeed. When we stray from the path of duty, and exceed the bounds of our own calling, we generally go wrong, and do great mischief. It would be well were all to follow our blessed Savior as their ensemble, as well as their teacher, to be contented with their lot, and useful in their stations.

God's people of old, whose deeds are recorded to their honor, and whose efforts were everywhere crowned with success, would never engage in any undertaking unless they were first truly convinced of their calling, evidenced by a divine testimony. This, which accounts for their great success, accounts also for our failures. "God said unto Moses, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you".

David had been assured that “God had made him the head of the heathen.” Jeremiah, speaking of himself, declares, “As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee.” Amos is not ashamed to own before the king, “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.” This plain shepherd was far more successful in his ministry than all the priests at Bethel, and why? Because he had been sent of God.

The anointing under the law signified that the persons so anointed were worthy and fit for the office, and endowed with every gift and grace to discharge their duties thoroughly and effectually. So Jesus is called CHRIST the Anointed. The gifts and the graces of the Spirit had been poured upon Him without measure (John 3:34). He was mighty to save. One said in Isaiah, “Make me not a ruler of the people, for in my house is neither bread nor clothing.” Princes should be rich. If they are poor, they will oppress their subjects, and wrest them of their possessions. Our help was not laid upon one faint with toil, or weary with fatigue, but was on Him in whom all fulness dwelt—irresistible in power, triumphant in victory, and more than a conqueror. As Samson rose at midnight, and carried the gates of Gaza to the top of a high hill, even so our victorious Redeemer arose from the grave, and having spoiled the territories of death and hell, He ascended in triumph into heaven. Wherefore, “he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Our great High Priest is not like the high priests of old; though touched with the feelings of our

infirmities, He has no infirmity of His own. His word is faithfulness and truth. Before Him the powers of darkness flee abashed; sin and destruction are conquered foes. What a source of joy to every believer, that his Savior, who is Christ the Lord, can accomplish what He hath undertaken, and finish what He hath begun. The leper's consolation sprang from Christ's power, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Soul, thou hast a God worthy of thy trust. His willingness to help thee is as great as His power to save thee. Seeing He is almighty, rest on His all-sufficiency, and put your whole trust in His mercy. Let men run here and there for support in their trials, and comfort in their disappointments; but let true Christians trust in Christ, bow with cheerful resignation to His will, rest with implicit confidence on His merits, and shew to the outward world the true source of their inward joy. In every trial trust in Him; He can preserve Moses in an ark of bulrushes, as well as save Noah in an ark of gopherwood. He can deliver by means, without means, and against means. "If He be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) Our salvation is in His hand, we are kept by His power. In the time of man's innocency, Adam's happiness was entrusted to his own charge, but he forfeited the charge, and lost the privilege. Now our salvation is placed in One who is mighty, yea, almighty to save, and who can pluck it out of His hands? Believer, all thine enemies, which disturb thy peace, and distress thy soul, shall be destroyed for ever. They shall be broken 'with a rod of iron,' and be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel," and thy refuge is beyond the reach of their darts.

Under the law it was customary to anoint with material oil. Samuel took a phial of oil, and poured it upon the head of Saul." The young prophet poured oil on the head

of Jehu. "The Captain of our Salvation was not anointed with material oil, but with the Holy Ghost the oil of gladness, of which material oil was only a type and shadow. This is the true oil, which humbles our pride, subdues our spirits, and stamps divine impressions on the heart. When this oil is poured on our consciences, it awakens our souls, and quickens our deadness, making us fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Of Samson it is said, that when "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him," he performed some wonderful deeds. Of the disciples we read, that when "the Spirit appeared unto them like cloven tongues, as of fire, and sat upon each of them," they were instantly proclaiming the wonderful works of God in divers languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. O ye "slow of heart," who can neither bear this fire of conviction, nor yet escape the force of its truth, pray God that His Spirit's influence may touch your heart, and your souls, "before you are aware, shall be made like the chariots of Amada." This oil cheers the soul more than anything else under the sun. The worldling may rejoice in his gains, and the sensual revel in his lust, but the pleasures of both are momentary, and are often attended with sorrow and shame; but he who receives this oil experiences that inward joy and gladness of heart, more than in the time their schemes prospered, and "their corn and wine increased." When the eunuch had tasted of this oil, "he went his way rejoicing." When Samaria had received it, the city "was glad." Paul and Silas, having richly partaken of this oil of gladness, sang praises at midnight in the dungeon. Ye who are merry, and rejoice at the public house, but downcast and drowsy in the house of prayer, come and partake of this Spirit, that your lives may be changed and your souls may be saved.

Second consideration, the end for which our Lord was anointed.

This unction shadowed forth the nature of His office. Under the law, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil. Some had filled two offices together, as Melchizedek, who was both king and priest. David was a prophet and a king. Jeremiah was a priest and a prophet. But He who had been anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, was invested with the three offices of prophet, priest, and king—a prophet to teach us, a priest to intercede for us, and a king to rule over us.

As a prophet He was to teach us His Father's will. This had been early foretold of Him; for Moses truly said unto the fathers, "a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Deuteronomy 18:15). Other prophets only in part, but He hath declared unto us the whole counsel of God. Hence He is called the Great Prophet "of His Church, mighty in word and in deed. Attend to His instructions, treasure them up in your hearts, for the soul that will not hear Him shall be destroyed from among the people." To Him we should "give the more earnest heed, for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:2). "He is the way, the truth, and the life; walk ye therein, and be ye saved" (John 14:6, Colossians 2:6).

Jesus was also anointed to be a priest. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek." As a high priest, His office consisted of two things, viz., making atonement for

sin, and making intercession for man. Under the law, when any one sinned, he was to bring an offering unto the priest, who was to offer it for him. When we have sinned against heaven and earth, our sins can only be expiated by the sacrifice which Jesus offered for sinners. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). And if our sins be not cleansed in His blood, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" (Hebrews 10:26). The priests of old would not part with one drop of their own blood for the best of the people, but He shed the blood of His heart for the vilest of men.

The other part of the priestly office consisted in making intercession. This He is well qualified to discharge, seeing He ever liveth to intercede for us. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Many are unfaithful to their trust because they are not righteous in their ways, but He who is our great High Priest is righteous in all His ways, and faithful in all His promises. All creatures are tender to their own nature. The bear will not be easily robbed of her young. Our great High Priest took upon Him our nature, that He might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "He loved His own, and loves them to the end. They are one with Him and He with them, members of His body, children of His Father, co-heirs and joint heirs with himself. For their sake He endured the penalties of sin, the pains of sin, and the agonies of the cross. Though now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, yet He bath still His eyes upon His people, and His ears open to their prayers. He sympathizes with the weary, and feels for the heavy laden.

Of His kingly office there can be no doubt. God declares of Him, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of

Zion." This had also been foretold of Him in a very explicit manner by the angelic annunciation, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of his father, David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." His kingdom was not of this world. In this world there must be subjects before there can be a sovereign, but in the kingdom of Christ it is not so. He chooses His people, and not the people their king. He hath not one subject who is not drawn by the power of His grace. "Other sheep," said He, "I have who are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). Were we to find a kingdom free from all inconveniences, and abundance with all advantages, who would not force his way to enjoy its privileges? We know that the kingdom of Christ is full of all such blessings as pertain to life here, and immortality hereafter, yet years elapse before we are within the true fold. He waits to be gracious. His long-suffering, tenderness, and compassion, yearn for our adoption. Though He often finds us asleep, yet He comes and awakens us; He leads us through the iron gates of difficulties, delivers us from thousand dangers, and never rests, until, through Him, we reach the eternal city—His kingdom in heaven. Often we are betrayed to fear, but as long as He reigneth, everything shall work together for its good; and whether of dominion, power, extent, or duration, "of His kingdom there shall be no end." In a clock there are several wheels, which run counter to one another, some move slowly, others whirl about with great quickness; yet all unite in keeping the clock in motion, and contribute their share to make a true index of the flight of time. Even so is every

event, however opposite it may seem, disposed by the secret, impelling hand of God, to promote His glory and further the salvation of His people. This is wonderfully illustrated: "When our Lord was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him, and, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. But when He awoke, He rebuked the wind and the waves, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39). The disciples seemed so astonished at the effect produced, that it is said "they marveled, and said, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Jacob once complained, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Yet, though old, it was not so, for he saw them all again in comfort and prosperity, which made his heart rejoice.

Our blessed Savior is a King who protects His people, and fights for His subjects. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most Mighty;" and in the vision granted to St John, He is described "as clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." Angels are amazed at this sight, and ask in astonishment, "Who is this with dyed garments?" These garments He wears as a badge to His people. When they rest, He fights; when they are mourning over your sins, He is conquering principalities in their behalf. He not only fights with them, but also for them. "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, for He fighteth for you." This consideration, which affords sweet comfort to the godly, should strike terror into the heart of the wicked; if sinners resist His will, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us," they shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy; if they continue their cry, "let us break His bands asunder, and cast His cords from us,"

there will come a day, when He will “break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Kiss the Son, lest He be angry (Psalm 2:2); bow the knee to the scepter of His grace, lest ye be consumed in the midst of your sins”.

When we, through sin, were cut off from the favor of God, He took upon Him our nature, that He might reconcile us unto himself, and now, by His Spirit, applies that reconciliation to our souls. Under this dispensation of grace He appears under three different characters, still it is the same God, rich in mercy and infinite in love. This is one of the deep mysteries of the Gospel-divine essences which can no more be separated than heat, light, and air; the three great essentials of fire. Human wisdom can never comprehend this truth, yet human souls believe through faith on the eternal I AM, who hath revealed it. To maintain this doctrine in all its essentials is a matter of the greatest consequence, as our eternal salvation stands or falls therewith. We must insist upon this grand peculiarity of the Christian religion, as it is the foundation of all our hopes. Let others triumph in the notion of their superior knowledge, we will simply adhere to the doctrines of the Bible, and not presume to be wise above what is written. Let our sole aim to be like this triune God. Nothing can make us resemble God more than having God’s grace, “to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hate us.” A mother will leave for a moment her dying child, to rescue a beast from perishing. God, who prefers mercy before sacrifice, will dispense with His own worship, while a sheep, fallen into a pit, is lifted out.

Third consideration, the lesson it teaches, and the blessings we reap.

They assume Christ's name, and through Him become partakers of the same blessings. They too are anointed, as the precious ointment which was poured upon the head of Aaron ran down his beard, and went down to the skirts of his garments," even so the oil of gladness, wherewith our Lord Jesus was anointed, ran, and still continues to run down, to bless and enrich the meanest of His people. May we be so united by faith to our living Head, that, being "His fellows," we may not only be called after His name, but be made partakers of His grace. May the oil of gladness, distilling from His anointed head, drop by drop, be poured into our souls, until, having received of "His fulness, and grace for grace, that we may not merely profess His name, but bear His image.

Seeing, then, that the Father hath anointed the Son, we should also anoint Him. We may anoint His feet with our tears. It is said of one that "she washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head." Tears of true penitents are precious in God's sight, so precious, indeed, that it is said of Him, "'Thou putttest my tears in thy bottle.'" Many complain of hard times but few complain of hard hearts. Many weep for the losses they sustain but few mourn for their souls which perish. Christ shed the blood of His heart for the sins of others. Will you not weep for your own? Tears which spring from a broken and a contrite heart procure peace which the world cannot give, and inherit a blessing the world cannot bestow. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." We may anoint His head with the affection of true love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." It is the richest treasure which God bestows, and the sweetest grace which we can possess. Other persons and things we may

love too much, but He who is anointed of the Father may love too little. "Mary loved much," but not too much. Angels cannot sufficiently love Him who is love. The Church, unable to recount His manifold excellences, sums up the whole in this brief summary, "He is altogether lovely." The more we love Him, the more we shall continue to love Him. It is the essence of the Godhead, for "God is love." May this love be shed abroad in our hearts, and transform us to the likeness of His Son. May it kindle in our souls a flame, that we may love Him who is the "chief among ten thousand," with an ardour which many waters cannot quench, and the floods of persecution cannot drown. When we truly love Him who is anointed of the Father, we shall also love them who are anointed of Him, and be kindly affectionate one to another.

We should also, like Nicodemus, anoint His body. This is done by compassion, pity, and tenderness, shewn towards those who are "His fellows being true Christians. This is the most fragrant ointment that can be poured on Him. They are flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone. Neither distance, poverty, nor time, can dissolve the union cemented by love, centred in Him, still subsisting between Him and His people. He weeps with them that weep, and rejoices with them that rejoice. Every wrong done unto them lie deems as an injury inflicted upon himself, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto them, ye have not done it to me" (Acts 9:4). In proportion as God hath blessed us we should prove a blessing to others, and though without faith no work can be pleasing in His sight, yet our faith must be seen by our works, appear in our life and conversation. The woman who poured ointment on His head

will have the deed proclaimed “for a memorial of her, wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached.” He who counts up your tears, also reckons in His book your good works and godly deeds. On that august and awful theatre of the last day, He will proclaim to a whole universe all the secrets of your hearts, every mite you have given to His service, every journey you have taken to His house, every back you have clothed, every need you have allayed, every tear you have shed, and every prayer you have offered. If you have tasted of the oil of gladness in your souls, you will honor the Lord with your substance, and anoint His body, His members in need, with the first-fruit of your increase. May it please Him who was anointed of the Father, through His Holy Spirit, to bless your life, and save your souls! Amen.

Chapter 3

“If Thy Brother Shall Trespass...”

Sermon 3

*Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass
against thee, go and tell him his fault
between thee and him alone : if he shall
hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

— Matthew 18:15

OUR blessed Savior, having before warned His disciples against giving offense, here directs them how to deal with those who have offended them. If thy brother trespass against thee, either by falsehood or injury, damaging thy reputation, or insulting thy person, or in any manner that hurts thy feelings, or grieves thy soul, then the rule is, *o o* and tell him his fault.” Never reproach him in his absence, or speak ill of him to others. Let no hatred root in thine heart, nor any malice rancor in thy bosom. “Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end. Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself, and discover not a secret to another.”

Here we propose, with the divine assistance, to show :

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I. Whom we are to reprove “If thy brother.”

II. Why we are to reprove—“Shall trespass against thee.”

III. How we are to reprove—“Go and tell him his fault.”

IV. The object of our reproof “If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

I. Whom we are to reprove—our brother.

In a general sense, every man is our brother. “God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” God also highly resents breach of brotherly affection, and promises signal blessings on brotherly love. Through the prophet Amos, God declares, “For three transgressions of Edom, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he did pursue his brother with a sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever.” Though “ brother “implies every individual, yet there is a peculiar sense in which the term is still employed, and in which the word “brother” is yet to be understood. By “brother,” our Savior might probably here mean one of His own disciples, one bound to Him, and united to us by stronger ties than that of blood. Having been created by God the Father, begotten again to a new life by God the Holy Ghost, our blessed Savior is not ashamed to call such His brethren, and any kindness done to the least of them He reckons as done to himself. “We are one body and one spirit, even as we are called in one

hope of our calling. We have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” holding the same views, sharing in the same privileges, and look forward to the same inheritance, the same rest, and the same joys.” “We,” saith the apostle, are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” As in the natural body, the members have the same care one for another, that when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. When the foot is hurt, the eyes examine the wound, the ears attend to the orders given, and the hands apply the remedy prescribed. We should rescue our brother from all dangers, bear his burdens, and relieve his necessities. Connive not at his sin, warn him freely, and, if it be necessary, rebuke him sharply. Pursue the path of duty. Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” and your labour shall never be in vain.

II. We are to shew why, or for what, we are to reprove our brother.

“If thy brother trespass against thee.” This seems to characterize the offense, yet the offense is very grave, for it includes not only personal offenses and temporal disadvantages, but likewise every sin committed against God, and every evil done against our neighbor. Every true Christian seems far more concerned for the honor and glory of God than for any insult leveled against himself, and feels for others as much as he feels for himself. Moses was as much grieved at Israel’s sins, as if he had himself been guilty of their crimes. “If thou wilt not,” said he, “forgive their sin, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.” And St Paul declares the same truth. “Who is weak, and I am not weak, who is offended, and I burn not? Our broth-

er's trespasses, when allowed to go unreprieved, not only dishonor God, injure our neighbor, wound ourselves, but also threaten to involve us in his punishment. For Achan's sin thirty-six men were slain. For the sin of Eli's sons many in Israel fell, and the ark of God was taken. For David's sin in numbering the people, no less than seventy thousand died of the pestilence. The sins of individuals affect the whole community, it leavens the whole lump, and at length ruins the whole fabric. It shuts the windows of heaven, clouds drop not their fatness, the earth yields not her increase, famine begins her work, judgment begins to fall, and terrible desolation sweeps through the land. Seeing, then, these fearful consequences, which ensue from our negligence, ought we not to reprove our brother's trespasses? Go and tell him his faults between thee and him

III. How we are to reprove—“go and tell him his fault.”

This is no easy task, and needs great wisdom and much grace. A few rules for our guidance, both in the exercise and discharge of our duty, we shall here lay down.

1. Ascertain, beyond all doubts, that the person whom we are to reprove is actually guilty of the sin laid to his charge. Until you have obtained the clearest evidence of his guilt, intrude not with any proffered services. This the text implies—“if thy brother trespass against thee.” Let the charge be first proved. Let no idle report prejudice thy judgment, and let no prejudice bias thy mind. Evil tongues carry evil tidings. When the accused is found innocent, the accusers rather grieve he is not guilty, than

rejoice at his innocence and acquittal. Such are “witnesses against their neighbors without a cause.” If you would reprove with propriety, be cautious how you condemn hastily. Remember that “love thinketh no evil.” Use no harshness, nay, take heed lest you fall. Weigh well the evidence, examine the test of its truth, consider long the charge, the nature of the fault, and the degree of its malignity, and let the gentleness of your reproof be tempered with all the tenderness of love.

2.The prophet, when he proclaims, “that the soul which sinneth shall die,” does not specify any particular sin, knowing that every sin deserves death. Yet when we compare sins together, some appear light, others seem aggravated, and marked with great enormity. This distinction is shown in our Lord’s testimony before Pilate, “he who delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin;” and the same sentiment is expressed in the text, “thou hast gained thy brother.” He could not have been gained unless he had been lost. One is not lost when he yields to natural infirmities, to which we are all subject, and which are inseparable from our imperfect state. In many things we all offend.” The sin for which we should dare reprove our brother should not consist of those small offenses, or of light nature, but of an aggravated character, as needed severe discipline, such as Church censure and Church excommunication.

3.The physician seldom administers his medicines when all hopes of recovery are past, much more should he forbear when he knows they would do more harm than good. You should likewise spare your reproofs when more likely to prove injurious rather than beneficial.

IV. The object of our reproof “If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

It is better not to labour than to labour to no purpose. To reprove some persons is worse than lost labour. It only serves to confirm their prejudice, to establish their resentment, and rekindle their anger. An enraged madman, or a blasphemous scoffer, you do wiser to avoid than attempt to reprove. Abigail never reproved Nabal for his rash and scornful reply to David's young men. She knew that to admonish his enraged bosom at the time would be only adding fuel to the fire, and rekindling the spark, just allayed, to burn with greater force and fury. In some instances the best efforts utterly fail. Hence we hear the complaint in Ezekiel's prophecy, “Son of Man, the house of Israel is to me become dross; all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace.’ There they lie melting, and if the heat of the furnace remove not the dross, nothing can. We should then seek wisdom from above, and pray for the Spirit's teaching that you may know whom and how to reprove, lest you injure the cause you are endeavoring to serve. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine: lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again, and rend you.” To reprove profitably, needs all the work of a cool head and a gracious heart. It is the peculiar province of a good man, for none but a good man will truly feel and really grieve for the wickedness of the wicked. When you reprove, go to your brother in the spirit of meekness, and deal as tenderly with him as if you were going to probe an instrument into a deep wound. It needs the utmost delicacy, and requires the truest sympathy.

When Elijah was concealing himself from the vengeance of Jezebel, in a cave on Mount Horeb, a spirit of despair embittered his soul; the persecution he was suffering caused a cry of complaint, and in a fit of despondency he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. His zeal had been great for the Lord, but now his soul had sunk in despair, and he longed to die; at this time he felt the gentle touch of an angel's hand, and heard the gentle reproof of his voice, saying, "What doest thou here ? "Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord, and, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, and after the wind an earthquake, and after the earthquake, fire, and after the fire, a still small voice."

Thus God shewed that He had many means, both terrible and awful, whereby He might destroy the strongest, and make the stoutest tremble, to humble the mind and bow the heart; but in this instance He calmed the prophet's ruffled spirit by His tender pity—the still small voice— rather than by the loud and alarming displays of His majesty.

Some men's reproofs are violent and vehement, like a whirlwind, tearing all to pieces, and by its force driving the brother to greater ruin. Others are so sudden and cutting, like an earthquake, they rend the conscience, and inflict wounds with fresh sores, exposed and unhealed. Others, again, having more zeal than knowledge, like fire, consume the very existence of hope, rather than enlighten the mind and save the soul. But God is in none of these. His reproofs come with a gentleness and tenderness, blended with meekness and compassion, which move all the inner feelings, and by the load of a brother's sympathy

draws out a brother's soul. Be wise in your admonitions, and gentle in your reproofs. May God's Spirit lead you to the knowledge of all truth, and direct you in the performance of all duty!

When you are about to reprove a brother, do not send for him, nor write to him, or wait for him, but go to him. This will convince your brother that your heart is not estranged from him, nor your sympathy closed against him. Seek an opportunity for the occasion in the same manner, and from the same source as you seek wisdom for the work.

God did not call our first parents to an account of their transgression till the cool of the day— till they saw their nakedness, and the miserable condition to which sin had reduced them—not until then did He appear amongst the trees of the garden, to reason with them for their conduct, and to reason with them for their sin. As “there is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence,” so there is a time to reprove, and to forbear reproving. There is a time in which the transgression of the wicked may be manifold, and their sins mighty; a time in which they may afflict, take a bribe, and turn aside the poor in the gate from their right; in that time the prudent will keep silence, for it is an evil time. It is never wise to draw a sword against a madman, nor venture to sea in a storm. When the spies brought back an evil report respecting the land of promise, there was a great tumult created in the camp, and great indignation expressed against Moses and Aaron; but they “fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of Israel,” and while they were thus prostrate on the ground, their fury ceased, and their rage cooled down. There are, therefore, seasons for reproofs,

and all unseasonable reproof will be an ineffectual reproof.

“Tell your brother his fault between you and him alone.” If his trespass was secret, do not make it public : bury his sin in your own bosom. Try to heal his soul without wounding his fame. When Joseph’s bowels yearned to make himself known to his brethren, gently reproving them of their unkindness, he suffered none to be present but his brethren and himself. When God reproved Aaron and Miriam for their murmuring against Moses, he called them into the tabernacle, causing them to withdraw from the open eye and the open ear. Private faults should have private hearing; expose not his weakness, and publish not his faults. Let the glory of God, the hatred of sin, and the salvation of your brother’s soul, be your chief aim. Stimulated by such motives, and guided by such a spirit, “go to him and tell him plainly, unfold his crime before him, point out its nature, its aggravation, and its awful consequences, and with unmistakable earnestness, blended with unfeigned compassion, ask him, is not this sin ? Is not this crucifying again the Son of God ? Does it not wound the conscience, endanger the soul, and dishonor God ? A milder course, and softer accents, would too much resemble Eli’s conduct, who only said to his sons, “Why do ye so ? “Spare not your reproofs when the truth is in danger. Paul withstood Peter to his face. Nathan shewed no favour to David. Elijah told Ahab, “where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood.” Nehemiah charged Sanballat, “Thou hast,” said he, touching Sanballat’s falsehood, “feigned them out of thine own heart. “Such intrepid reprovers are not often found. Such reproofs are valuable and whole-

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some. They restrain bad actions, they encourage good works, they stem the tide of sin, and further the salvation of man; they promote the glory of God, and extend the kingdom of Christ; they secure peace on earth, and goodwill amongst men.

Chapter 4

*“Remember me when thou comest
into thy kingdom.”*

Sermon 4

At one and the same time, behold, he (the thief) is born into Christ, and is dying to the world.

— Reverend Daniel Rowlands

*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember
me when thou comest into thy king-
dom. And Jesus said unto him, To-day
shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

— Luke 23:42-43

In this, as well as in many other instances, we possess abundant evidence of God's free grace, as manifested towards mankind. The woman of Samaria furnishes a wonderful instance of divine grace (John 4). She had nothing to deserve the least favor. She neither offered to draw the water from the well to quench His thirst, nor made the least effort to refresh His weary limbs. Yet, by God's grace, this person, once lost in infamy and

sin, tasted of the living water, and was the first to proclaim the glad tidings in the city of Samaria.

Also, Mary Magdalene and Saul of Tarsus were remarkable instances of divine grace (Luke 8:1-3; Acts 9). Yet one probably had witnessed many of the Lord's miracles, and the other had seen a light from heaven; but of the thief on the cross, he had seen no miracles, and heard no voice from heaven. He was nailed to the fatal tree and drawing near the end of his fatal course, had nothing presented to his view but a crucified Saviour - a Saviour with a mangled body and a pierced side. Yet in a few minutes he was converted. Converted from a thief to a martyr; taken from the gallows into paradise. What wonders of grace! A man sentenced to the cross, in the twinkling of an eye, is changed into a saint. This man makes public profession of faith in his Redeemer expiring on the same tree and is for ever absolved from all his sins. The Preacher said that "there is a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh" (Eccles. 3). Now, all these contrary schemes God's wisdom unite into one, and centre together in the conversion of the thief. At one and the same time, behold, he is born into Christ, and is dying to the world. Grace is planted in the soul, and sin is taken up by the roots. The Son of God expiring on the cross gives life to the dying thief. With Christ's stripes, then received, the sins of his heart were for ever forgiven (Isaiah 53:5). When the body of death was broken down, the work of grace was built up. When he was weeping for his sins, he was rejoicing that he should be soon with Jesus in paradise. Saint Chrysostom declares this to be the greatest

of miracles. The darkening of the sun is not so great as enlightening the understanding. The cleaving of the rocks is not compared to the softening of the heart; the rending of the veil of the temple, with the removal of the veil of darkness, which keeps the soul in the shadow of death. Moses' rod, the authority of his divine mission, well confirms this truth (Exodus 4:2). Every creature seemed subject to its authority. It divided the sea, it smote the earth, light was under its control, and darkness felt its sway; but on Pharaoh's heart it produced no effect, and exercised no control. It is easier to tear the rock in pieces than make one heart who is hardened in sin: contrite, broken, and penitent. Satan might say, that in the hour of temptation he had seduced the twelve disciples, yet Christ shows that He can rescue in the hour of death. It is said that Solomon fought against the Egyptians with their own horses. So doth the Church confound the enemies of the cross of Christ, and make their death redound to His glory. Here is a triumph, where the Captain of our salvation was more than a conqueror, and victory which none but Jesus could achieve (Hebrews 2:10).

Here we also perceive amazing humility. It was an astonishing act of condescension that he should "take upon him the form of a man," but greater that he should assume "the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7). Greater still, that he became "a worm and no man" (Psalm 22:6). But greatest than all, that he should die like a thief between two thieves. Behold the love of Christ! He accepts the tongue of a thief to proclaim His divinity, and permits it to establish His innocence. An angel's voice or a prophet's tongue he might employ to proclaim His glory, but he chose a thief's tongue that from the meanness of the instrument His power should be more apparent and

His glory more exalted. See also here infinite compassion. Behold the Lord of Life pouring out the blood of His heart amongst two thieves, that He might expiate the guilt of one of them. A tree has grown crooked, leaning altogether to one side, it is likely, in the end, to fall in that direction. But here is a man, whose downward course all his life-long pointed strongly towards hell, yet when he comes to be cut down, things are reversed, and he is taken up to heaven. Not only are his crooked ways made straight and his perverse will subdued, but his soul is sanctified, and made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. In an instant this man was conducted through every operation of grace, and brought not merely to lay hold by faith on the promises, but into actual possession of eternal life.

Saving one thief, and leaving the other to perish, savours much of election by grace; but God's judgments are very secret and unsearchable (Deuteronomy 29:29). We should neither doubt nor dispute about them, but rather reverence His ways, and hallow His most holy name. Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar were equally blessed with the means of grace, but the same means produced different effect. The one was hardened, the other was humbled. They were both men of the same nature, occupying the same station; being kings, and guilty of the same crime, both had led the children of Israel into captivity. Both were visited with plagues from heaven, and both were, alike admonished to know the rod, and Him who appointed it. One said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him" (Exodus 5:2). The other cried out, "I praise, and extol, and honor the King of Heaven" (Daniel 4:37). God loves to display His sovereign will. "I will," said He to Moses, "be gracious to whom I will be

gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Exodus 33:19). He will do what seems good in His sight - where "two are in the field, one shall be taken, the other shall be left" (Matt. 24:40). Men who wish to do as they please, are often found disputing about the ways of God. Let us acknowledge only His name, and bow always to His will.

From the mercy extended to the one and withheld from the other, we learn that our safest way to heaven lies between hope and fear. Fear is the cable which lays hold on hope, and hope is the anchor which makes fear firm. Fear removes all self-confidence, knowing how unworthy we are of the least of God's mercies. Hope, again, inspires with confidence, knowing the goodness of God, how boundless He is in mercy, how matchless in His love. Upon these graces doth the Lord confer His blessing, and bestow His gifts. "He taketh pleasure in them who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy" (Psalm 147:11). O believer, the way that leads unto life is safe, lying between hope and fear. The one preserves thee from presumption; the other keeps thee from despair. We fear lest we enter not into our rest; we hope, waiting for the coming of our Lord. These are two strong bulwarks, to fence us on each side, and to keep us in the narrow oath. The one is the thief who was left to perish, the other is the thief who found favor with the Lord; the former should teach you to fear, the latter should teach you how to hope. Some may appear near heaven, while they stand on the brink of hell. Others seem to be verging on destruction, while God is drawing them to heaven. "Take heed to yourselves, watch and pray" (Mark 13:33). Christ can deliver at the eleventh hour, and "save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him."

Saint Ambrose saith that despair is the greatest of all sins, not as an offense against God, but as most dangerous to men. It bars their blessedness, and cuts off their salvation. It is the blackest on the list, and the worst in existence. Judas' sin in selling his Saviour was not equal to his guilt of despair, which made him think God like unto himself, without a will to change, and without a power to forgive. "Woe unto such, for they have gone into the way of Cain," imagining "their iniquity to be greater than can be pardoned" (Jude 1:11). Wonderful, indeed, is God's grace; it brings life out of death, light out of darkness, and salvation of sinners from the condemnation of the Saviour. His mercy knows neither measure nor end. Despair not of His goodness, fear His wrath, and hope in His salvation.

Let us consider the great change which God's grace wrought in this man. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross, but all that he had he gave unto the Lord. Only his heart and tongue were at his disposal, and these he freely devoted to his Master's service. With his tongue he vindicated Christ's innocence, saying, "This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41) and in his heart he loved his Redeemer, wishing to be with Him in paradise. Herein are confession and faith, and herein consists man's salvation. "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). He also bore witness against himself, saying, "We receive the due reward of our deeds." This is the penitent's true token of deep contrition. "They confess their transgression unto the Lord, and their iniquity they do not hide" (Psalm 32:5). How much better would it have been for Judas to admit his guilt, than asking "Is it I" forfeiting God's favor

by seeming to be innocent (Matt. 26:22). Acknowledging our guilt and condemning our own deeds are precious gifts of grace. Calling heaven and earth to witness against our sins, expressing our unworthiness to claim God as our Father, or call ourselves as His children, smiting upon our breast, and suing for mercy, have once opened the Father's arms, and will again open the doors of paradise. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Again, we find that he prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." With tears in his eyes, with death in his face, and with eternity before him, he turns to his Redeemer, and with true, yet touching words, he pours out his heart, saying, "Lord, remember me." Here is deep humility. He does not pray, remove my pains, and let my sufferings cease; though I have not the honor to die for thee, yet I die with thee; he asks not for the martyr's crown, nor seeks he for the honor of sitting on the right hand in glory; he does not assume the burning zeal of St John, saying, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20); nor, like the spirits under the altar, cry out, "How long, how long" (Rev. 6:10). Whether it be soon, or whether it be yet a long time, all his prayer is, "Remember me" (Luke 23:42; Psalm 106:4).

He had also strong faith. It might be said to exceed that of Abraham, Moses, or Isaiah. Abraham had received many, great, and precious promises. Moses had witnessed His presence in the burning bush, and Isaiah had seen the Lord sitting on His throne in glory. Of some it is said, great was their faith, but great also were the miracles which they had witnessed; but the thief saw not the Lord on His throne, nor God in the bush. He witnessed not His miracles on earth, nor sat in His presence on the mount. It

is said that he knew how He had been sold by Judas, and forsaken by His disciples. He heard their blasphemy, and understood their danger. Yet he believes in Jesus, in the face of every obstacle, and proclaims His glory in the depth of His humiliation. Some, who had seen the Lord raising the dead, were afterwards shaken in their faith; but this man beheld him nailed to the cross, and sinking under the pains of death. He believed in the resurrection of the dead, and prayed for that life in the hour of death. See how grace exceeds nature. His fellow thief knew of no life but the present, and that life was all he wanted. "If thou be Christ," said he, save thyself and us" (Luke 23:39). If Thou hast any power, exert it in rescuing us from the cross, and restore thyself to liberty. On the contrary, the penitent thief believed that "his kingdom was not of this world" (John 18:36) and earnestly prayed, that, when Christ should come to reign in His own kingdom, he might be graciously remembered.

Whilst hanging between heaven and earth, having no rest for his body, yet he trusted entirely in Christ. Daniel was calm in the lions' den, but he knew that God had sent His angels to close their mouths. David was full of confidence in the midst of Saul's army, but he knew that the Lord preserved him. But this man, when all circumstances seemed to conspire against him in the agony of death, when his Lord was expiring by his side, was full of hope, and reposed a calm, steadfast confidence in his redeeming God. Lastly, we perceive in this man that love which is strong as death. Though the Lamb of God was "dumb as a sheep under the shearer's hand," (Isaiah 53:7) and though all His disciples had feared and fled, yet he rebukes his companion, admits the justice of their punishment, and makes a confession of Christ as the Son of God.

Our Lord said to Peter, the greatest of the apostles, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now;" but to this man He saith, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise" (John 13:36, Luke 23:43). A testimony of his title to paradise, a meekness for heaven, he in an instant receives. It pleased the Lord that Paul's conversion should be almost an instantaneous act, suddenly he was struck to the ground, and suddenly he heard a voice from heaven. Yet some days passed between his conversion and his preaching; but this man was a confessor and martyr at the same time, confessing Christ before all, and preaching to his fellow-companion in death, saying, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation" (Luke 23:40). Thou needs not fear the law, thou needs not fear the Jews, more neither can do. But, oh, dost thou not fear God, He can yet do more. He hath still power to cast thy body and soul into hell. Learn hence, that all who possess that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, wish the same impression to be made on all men's souls. Knowing that there is bread enough in their Father's house, they urge all to partake thereof, that they should nourish their souls, and preserve them to eternal life. Having tasted the sweetness of divine life in their own souls, they long that others also should become partakers of the same blessing. "Come," say they with the Psalmist, "and we will declare what the Lord hath done for our souls" (Psalm 66:16). The just receive often more than they ask for. The thief on the cross desired only to be renumbered, and, behold, immediately paradise is promised him. The thief, who had not been working in the vineyard, yet at the eleventh hour received his reward, what, then, shall they receive who have borne the burden and heat of the day? This man on the day of his new birth

was admitted into the region of bliss. Grace and glory flowed in upon him so rapidly, that, like a full tide, they at once brought him to the haven where he would be safe. Through God's grace a desire is excited in the soul for heavenly things, and by God's mercy the desire is at once realized. This man no sooner said, "Remember me," than all the riches of paradise were conferred upon him. O happy man! Thy Judge not only released thee from thy bondage, delivered thee from thy fears, but bestowed upon thee, from the abundant riches of His grace, the reward of eternal life. This is God's way of dealing with men. Abraham asked only for a son, but God gave a son from whose loins, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5). Solomon asked for so much wisdom as would enable him to discern between the good and the bad, but God gave him great riches and honors besides. The servant who owed his Lord "ten thousand talents" only desired a longer time, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. But his Lord had compassion upon him, and forgave him the whole debt." Well doth the Church pray in the collect for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity, "Almighty and everlasting God, who art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve."

Chapter 5

*“When true believers have been
deprived of all their worldly
goods, they have still a God to
trust.”*

Sermon 5

*And we know that all things work together
for good to them that love God, to them
who are the called according to His
purpose.*

— Romans 8:28

As if the Apostle had said, besides the many consolations already imparted unto you, I have this also to add, that all things shall work together for your good. Holy Scripture is full of sweet consolations, and for every season of need there appears some promise of relief.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” He has deliverance for every distress. He will, with the temptation, make also a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. God “increases our consolations in proportion as the sufferings of Christ abound in us” (2nd Corinthians 1:5). He is not sparing of them to His people, but gives them “good measure;

pressed down, and running over" (Luke 6:38). "We know" the Apostle limits this knowledge to the people of God alone. It is a privilege to which the ungodly have no claim.

The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1st Corinthians 2:14). The real blessings of the Christian religion are known only to those who possess them. This world's treasures may appear most valuable to them who possess them not, but the hidden treasures of Gospel truth are only known to those who have found them. "The hidden manna and the new name" are things known to none "save to them that receive them" (Rev. 2:17). Spiritual joys the world cannot understand, and the Christian's privileges he does not appreciate. The beast of the field can form no conception of man's rational enjoyments; if it can have plenty of corn and hay, it cares for nothing more. So the natural man can form no notion of the believer's sweet joys, his heavenly pursuits, and heavenly pleasures. If he can secure Esau's inheritance, the fatness of the land, the increase of his corn and wine, he is content. Having no eyes to look towards heaven, and no heart to seek those things which are above, he grovels in the dust, and is under the serpent's curse. May God remove this veil, open their eyes, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth!

"We know" this is the parent of spiritual courage. A real persuasion that all things work together for our good is a most encouraging source. The hope of victory emboldens the soldier; the prospect of gain encourages the sailor - yet neither knows the end. Blind as to the future, they cannot tell the result; but believers do not run

with such uncertainty. Among all sorts of men which can be named, none have the like promises. When David had been deprived of all his prosperity, "he still encouraged himself in the Lord," (1st Sam 30:6) and soon all things were restored to him. We learn therefore, that, when true believers have been deprived of all their worldly goods, they have still a God to trust. To Him they may pour out their complaints, and from Him they expect deliverance; and while they can approach Him as their God, they will lack no good thing. Under their greatest losses, and in their greatest distresses, they have a promise, that, in their severest trials, they shall not be forsaken.

"Though they fall, they shall yet arise" (Micah 7:7-8). In their utmost straits, God is their refuge, and a very present help in trouble. His presence goes with them, and wherever they are there He is also. God said to the Israelites indeed, "I will go with you, and give you rest" (Exodus 33:14). "Them that are meek shall He guide in judgment; and such as are gentle, shall He learn His way" (Psalm 25). He will "lead them forth by the right way, that they may go to a city of habitation" (Psalm 107:7). Sometimes they are led by His Word, which is a "lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their paths" (Psalm 119:105). At other times, by His providence; our way is hedged in with thorns, lest we wander in the way, and be lost on our journey (Proverbs 4:26). Doubts about the way are often more perplexing, and more to be dreaded than dangers on the way. If assaulted by temptations on the way, our hearts should be thankful that we meet them there, as it would be death to meet them elsewhere. He will conceal us from dangers, and protect us from the enemy's darts (Eph. 6:16). "Thou art their hiding place, thou shalt preserve them from trouble" (Psalm 32:7).

Moses well knew the value of God's presence when he said, "If thou wilt not go with us, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 33:15). From this we learn that Moses chose rather to abide in that wilderness with his God, than go to Canaan, however rich and pleasant that country might be, without the presence of his God.

"But," saith he, "if thy presence go with us, we will go." Favour us with thy presence, then we will march whichever and whatever place thou mayest command. If our journey lies through the land of Moab, or if our course runs along the borders of Amalek, with thy presence we are ready to advance. Canaan itself would be more desolate than this dreary desert, if thy presence smiled not on our faces, and shine not on our paths. This presence is the saints' portion; it makes "all things work together for their good"; every instance of Providence, every accident of life, our crosses, our sorrows, and our troubles, work in our favour. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) Jacob once cried with anguish of heart, "Me have ye bereaved of my children, Joseph is not, Simeon is not, all these things are against me" (Genesis 42:36). Yet old as he was, he lived long enough to see that all these things were for him. The lost having been again found, and the long absent having again been restored, his heart experienced greater joy than if they had never been removed from inside the patriarch's tent.

"All things work together for good." Whoever truly believes this sentence may overcome all his fears, and fear no dangers. Joseph's history furnishes a remarkable instance of its truth. His father sent him to his brethren. They conspired to slay him. He is rescued by Reuben, and thrown into a pit. He is taken up by Judah, and sold to the Ishmaelites. He is falsely accused by his mistress,

and thrown into a prison by his master. Again, he was recommended to Pharaoh, and was made a ruler over the land of Egypt. Here many means were used, and many men employed. None of them saw God's design, yet, unknown to them, and contrary to their intentions, God made them work together with His counsel, and contribute their share to Joseph's advantage.

Not one thing, nor few things, but all things, are here said to work together for our good. God sometimes appears as an enemy, that He might prove our eternal friend. "Before I was afflicted," says the Psalmist, "I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word" (Psalm 119:67) and here we may exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33). His glory is seen when He works by means, without means, but most of all when He works in opposition to means. To open the eyes of the blind was a wonderful act, but more wonderful still when clay was used as means which is matter more likely to destroy than restore sight. Awful darkness of unspeakable dread filled Abraham's soul at the very time when God was about to communicate unto him the greatest light. God struck Paul with blindness when He was about to open the eyes of his soul. "All God's ways are mercy," (Psalm 25:10) and "all things work together for the good of those who love Him."

Afflictions also are wonderful means whereby this truth is verified. The cross is the way to the crown "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Thou brought us to the net, thou laidest affliction upon our loins, thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, we went through fire and water, and thou hast brought us to a wealthy place

(Psalm 66:12). The road to victory lies often along the valley of the shadow of death. The falling into the net leads to liberty and the boasting of enemies is often a prelude to the deliverance of the saints. If this, say the enemies, is the way to life, they shall remain in it long enough; if by this means they are to raise their heads to glory our feet shall remain on their necks yet a while. The proud man's ways shall come to the dust, and end in death. The path of the humble leads to honour, and ends in life. The journey to Canaan lay through the Red Sea, and was hindered by many provocations; on our way home we must pass through many tribulations, and have our faith exercised by many trials, yet "all work together for good to them that love God."

Afflictions are also profitable to us. The prodigal son had no thoughts of returning to his father before he had been humbled with the husk of the swine. Hagar's pride had not been subdued until she was dying of despair in the wilderness. Manasseh's heart had not been turned to the Lord, until he found himself bound with chains in the prison at Babylon. The ground which has not been ploughed and harrowed brings nothing but thorns and thistles. The heart which is not broken and contrite (Psalm 51:17) can never be a pleasing sacrifice unto God.

The finest gold is purified in the fire (1st Peter 1:7). The best houses are built of hewn stones. We can never be vessels of honour in our Father's house unless purified in the furnace of affliction, nor be lively stones in the walls of the New Jerusalem, until our sins are cut off by the hand of God. The ungodly, "because they have no change, fear not" (Psalm 55:19). "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone

into captivity, therefore his taste remains in him, and his scent is not changed" (Jer 48:11). O God, rather than this savour of death should rest upon us, let thy hand be upon us, to awaken us from our death-sleep, to purify us from our dross, and to cleanse us from all our sins.

It is not said that all things shall, but that all things do, work together. Not only the angels, who are our guardians, and the saints who pray for us, but that our very enemies shall minister to our profit. They have no such thoughts. This is not their aim. They meditate our destruction. It is said of that Assyrian whom the Lord sent to punish an hypocritical nation and to purge the wheat from the chaff, howbeit he means not so, neither does his heart think so; but, saith the Lord, though he hath no such views, yet he is only "carrying on my designs" (Isaiah 8:10). All the seeming accidents of life subserve to the same end, and centre in the same point. All tend to promote the glory of the Father, and the salvation of the children. Every reproach you suffer, every loss you sustain, every scorn that makes you blush, and every grief that makes you sad, every pain that tears your heart, and every shame that bows your head - your days of joy and days of sorrow - your plenty and your want - your health and sickness, your life and death - all combine to work together for your good. The text is a harvest of blessedness. The seed is sown. The Lord is at work. The whole creation is employed, men and angels, friends and foes, are all engaged in promoting its growth, fencing its bounds, and ripening its produce. O God, how amazing is thy love!

If sinners purpose to extinguish the spark of fire which the Lord hath kindled in the believer's heart, their purposes shall never succeed. It is a fire from heaven, and

the more the rain descends, the more it burns. It may burst into a flame, but it cannot be quenched. There are stars which shine brightest when the night is darkest. The evil intended against them is overruled for their good. Your malice is as weak to force them as your virtues are to draw them; yea, your very curses are converted into blessings. Everything works together for good to them that love God. All true believers will at last say with Joseph, "You thought evil against us, but God meant it unto good." The Philistines, envying David's growing fame, commanded him to return from the war, with the view to disgrace him. But the Lord turned their spite to David's advantage. Had he gone to battle, he would have been guilty of shedding his brethren's blood, and turning his hand against the Lord's anointed. Thus circumstances concurred to frustrate the intention of his enemies, and make their malice work for his good. The ungodly are often permitted to kill the body. They may wound unto death, but they cannot hurt the soul. God knows that the body is only corruptible raiment (dress), which must be soon put off, but He will preserve the soul. "Fear not them that can kill the body, but fear Him that can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt 10:28). "Though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, yet there is a river which makes glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:2).

Now let us inquire who are the persons for whose good God makes everything to work together? [Answer:] Those that love God. They are such as have been "called out of darkness into marvellous light; and translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col 1:13). "The love of God hath been shed abroad

in their hearts" (Romans 5:5). "They are a peculiar people," (1st Peter 2:9) who shew forth the praises of Him who loved them with an everlasting love, and called them according to His purpose. These are they - the highly favoured of the Lord - who's good is consulted in every dispensation of His providence, and in every purpose of His grace.

That all these things proceed from God is a truth everywhere acknowledged. The Psalmist said, "I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing" (Psalm 39:9). The patriarch Job expresses himself in the same strain, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Believers are not only patient under tribulations and sufferings, but grateful for them, grateful not only for God's mercies, but grateful for His judgments. As the Gospel allots many trials to the godly, so also it administers them many comforts, and strong supports. Their Great High Priest was tempted, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted. Believers know not their strength for victory, till they are tried in the day of battle. When they are surrounded with the sins which so easily beset us, they find that greater is He who is in them, than he who is in the world; as the prophet said, "Greater is He who is with you, than he who is in the world" (1st John 4:4). Indeed, God's presence is always needed, but in the hour of danger it is truly sweet. This is his support under difficulties, and his solace under their crosses. Be faithful unto the end, your sufferings need your patience, God's grace will be best seen in the dark days of adversity, and God's support will be most truly felt in the hour of death. God's grace, engrafted in the heart, is a plant which neither the tares of the field nor the thorns of the roadside

can break its power or choke its growth. "Be strong, then, in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph 6:10). This will enable you to endure the heat of persecution as well as the hardness of unbelief. See that your grace is a plant which can maintain its ground against the smiles of the world, as much as against its frowns. Let not the storms of temptation put out your light, nor the flood of many waters cool the ardour of your zeal. Be steadfast in your profession, and be established in the truth (Col 1:23). Beware lest Satan touch the white stone in your bosom, or the white robe of Christ's righteousness. Keep your conscience void of offence, and your life free from the world" (Acts 24:16, 1st John 2:15). Follow the Lord wholly "in spite of all persecutions", and "live godly in Christ Jesus", in spite of all oppositions. Suffer not the sun to fade your flowers, but to ripen your fruits. Let your spark kindle into a flame, and your mustard-seed grow into a tree. Grow in grace, and press toward the mark, for the prize of your high calling, until you come to the "fullness of the stature of Christ." Let the sense of your great weakness make you draw near unto the God of all strength. Let the use of all the means of grace, like so many brooks, swell your current, till your little stream becomes a river, and your river as Jordan in the time of harvest, overflowing its banks (Joshua 3:15). Let your path be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Let the blessings which have descended upon you from above, drop in the way as you go, and enrich the track you take, that you may minister grace to the hearers, and bring forth works meet for repentance, that men, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt 5:15-16). For your good, God hath engaged to make all things work together. He hath

undertaken your cause, and promised His support. Therefore invite your fellow-men to partake of your privileges, and taste of God's goodness (Psalm 34:8). Being thus instruments in God's hands to arouse the careless, to awaken them that sleep, to raise up them that are fallen, you will find yourselves to be working together for your own good, and for the glory of God.

Chapter 6

“Behold I stand at the door and knock.”

Sermon VI

Behold, I stand at the door and knock

— Revelation 3:20

BEHOLD! This expression stands in Holy Scripture as a star directing our attention to matters of weighty importance and deep significance. It is used on several occasions, and for various purposes. Sometimes to awaken our faith,— Behold ! a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” To arouse our hopes,—“ Behold ! I come quickly, and my reward is with me.” To excite our love,—“ Behold ! manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.” To alarm our fear, ‘Behold! He cometh with the cloud, and every eye shall behold Him.” To stir up our joy,—

“Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy.” To enliven our gratitude,—

“Behold! Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord.” To move our compassion, —

Behold! Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" and at other times, as in the text, to draw our attention to some momentous truth 'Behold! I stand at the door and knock.'

Who can contemplate this scene without feeling a thrill of joy and wonder penetrating his inward soul, seeing God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," should seek to enter man's heart, the source of all corruption, and to dwell therein, which would be the source of all blessing and peace.

Distance seems here annihilated, and happy reconciliation effected. God and man brought under the same roof, and sit at the same table; God comes down to dwell with man, not armed with thunder, nor clothed with thick darkness, as when He descended on Mount Sinai, when the sight was so terrible that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," but "in the form of a servant made in the likeness of men." He "could break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron asunder." With one breath He could tear up the mountains from their roots, and burst open the portals of hell. Yet He does not come to lay waste our dwellings and level us with the ground, but stands at our doors humbly seeking for admission.

It would have been an amazing condescension to see here one of the "saints made perfect in glory," one of the prophets of old, or one of the angelic host; but it is the Prince of Peace, the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts. He stands to manifest His readiness to enter in, and His patience in waiting for admission.

When we consider the heavens which God hath made, the moon and stars which He hath ordained, at whose presence the heavens drop, and whose voice rends the rocks, yet seeing him standing at our doors, we are

ready to exclaim, “What is man that thou are mindful of Him, and the Son of man that thou visitest Him.” Here let us consider three things :—

I. Who is said here to stand—God.

II. His attitude — “I stand.”

III. His employment—“I knock.”

I. Who is said here to stand—God.

The glorious Being who stands at the door of our hard hearts is no other than the mighty God, the creator of heaven and earth. He is before all, above all—the great and everlasting God. Neither the sun in the firmament of heaven, nor myriads of angels in glory, can in any degree approach Him who is Light of lights, and very God of very God, yet bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. God of His father—man of His mother—the true Melchisedec. View Him in His birth. He who inhabiteth eternity, having neither beginning nor end of days, condescends to be born in our world. The Father everlasting, an infant of a few days old—the Word unable to speak. He who upholds all things is himself upheld. The invisible Jehovah is seen by poor shepherds. The Lord of all disdains not to be the servant of all. At the creation man was made in the image of God, but now God appears in the form of a man. To see the sun stopping in its course, and its shadow turning back ten degrees, was an extraordinary sight, but it sinks into nothing when compared with the Sun of Righteousness coming down from heaven to earth— from the Father’s bosom to the virgin’s womb— from the height of glory to sojourn here below, —and from the mansions of the blessed to tabernacle amongst men. We may well then say, with one of

the ancient fathers, "I shall no longer wonder at the extent of the earth, the increase or decrease of the moon, or the boundless dimensions of the sky, through which unnumbered worlds revolve, but I will wonder and adore to see God in the flesh, and the Almighty in a cradle. This is an astonishing event—the cause of great rejoicing. Rejoice, ye of the seed of Adam, for the promised seed is come. Rejoice, ye of the seed of Abraham, for ' the day which he did earnestly desire to see is come. Rejoice, ye who " sit in darkness," for " the Sun of Righteousness is risen." Rejoice, ye sinners, and be exceeding glad, for a Saviour is born into the world. Sing praises to God in the highest, for His goodwill towards men. Hear Chrysostom's melodious strain upon this joyful occasion : " O the height and depth of God's mercy, the bowels of Jesus' love. Thou art the lovely plant of the heavenly paradise. What attractions could draw thee thence? What force could draw thee out of thy Father's bosom—the palace of thy glory ? Nothing but thine infinite love and infinite goodness."

Consider for what end He came. Not to increase His happiness, but to do us good, and make us happy. His happiness no more depends upon His creatures than the sun's bright rays are illumined by the earth's dark vapors. "Our goodness extendeth not unto Him." Before the heavens were made, He was infinitely happy. The Father rejoicing in the Son, and the Son rejoicing in the Father, and both rejoicing in the Holy Ghost. God has no more need of our service to make Him great and glorious, than the sun of the glow-worm to make it bright and genial. Were we all to perish in one day, our death, as regards God, would be only the same as the death of a thousand lepers who depend upon a rich man's alms. God created us that He might communicate His goodness, impart His

happiness, bestow His blessing, and increase the human race.

Behold, this love is not shown unto angels, but unto men, who are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose garments are filthy rags, whose God is their belly, and whose end is destruction; who hate Him in their thoughts, in their words, and in their actions. Truly we may say that God's ways are not like our ways; for He still waits to be gracious, and continues to knock.

II. Consider His attitude,—He stands.

This implies His readiness to help, and His willingness to assist. Stephen, in • the hour of his martyrdom, “ saw the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Often He is represented as sitting on God's right hand, but when the trials of His Church are stained with the blood of martyrs, the great Captain of our salvation, having His eye fixed on the conflict, and having His sword girded upon His thigh, stands, as if ready to rush into the midst of the battle, and in the very jaws of death, to proclaim an eternal victory. Thus, in the text, He is represented as standing—ready to take possession of our hearts, and confer upon us the privileges of eternal life. In very moving and touching terms He solicits entrance. ‘O that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep my commandments, that it might be well with them, and their children for ever.’ To Jerusalem He saith, weeping, “ How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” And in another place He bewails the hardness of our heart, Ye will not come unto me, that ye

might have life." Though we spurn His grace and despise His goodness, yet He still stands at those doors, that have never yet been opened to Him. He hath the power in His hand to burst open every door by force, but He hath the patience in His heart to stand and wait for admission. He could devour us in a flame of His fury, but He would rather soften us with the dew of His Spirit. Many times hath He come. Long has He been standing. "Forty years was He grieved with that generation." Slow is His anger to kindle, long is His patience to endure." But the longest day has an end. The brightest sun will ere long be set. Open your hearts to receive His message. "Kiss the Son lest He be angry," for when His wrath is kindled but a little, ye shall perish from the way." We furnish many excuses. Some have their farms and their oxen, others have their cares, and no "convenient season?" The world hath its share. Sin enters in. Care and pleasure sit on the throne, evil imagination continually there do dwell, but the Saviour of men yet stands without. O my soul, answer Him whilst He calls, open whilst He knocks. Open not only the door of our lips to sing His praises, but the door of our hearts to welcome His presence.

My son, give me thine heart." Your alms will have their promised reward. Your good deeds will not lose their crown of glory. Your prayers, like incense, ascend with a sweet savor before the throne of grace, yet without the heart they are but solemn mockeries and sad delusions. As the temple sanctifies the gold, and the altar sanctifies the gift, so our heart sanctifies our prayers, consecrates our alms, and renders our good works acceptable in the sight of God. A broken and contrite heart is the most acceptable sacrifice we can ever offer. God created it, it is His

workmanship, surrender it unto Him, and give Him the glory.

III. And lastly, we consider our Lord's employment,—He knocks.

This He does by the ministry of His word, and this is a very powerful means. "The weapons of our warfare," saith the Apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." When God's word shall drop as the rain, and His speech distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," then mighty effects are instantly produced. The strongholds of unbelief totter to the ground; the hard heart is a broken sacrifice; the barren land brings forth her increase; the raging sea of persecution ceases; the swelling tide of pride ebbs; and the sea of tumultuous passion is calmed. Peace reigneth in the heart, and a thrill of joy in believing penetrates through every faculty of the soul. So mighty is the Word of God.

God knocks also by His mercies. This is a subject for angels to dwell upon, and a worthy theme for their eternal praises. Hear how they sing, and let your heart join in the chorus." The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great kindness; yea, His mercy is over all His works." It extends to the stars, and "reaches unto the heavens; "it pervades universal nature, and sweetens every spiritual grace; it is the penitent's prayer, "Lord have mercy upon me; "it is the saint's song, 'for thy mercy endureth for ever."

He knocks by afflictions. These are God's messengers. Their solicitations are earnest, close, and pressing. By them we are earnestly invited to come to God, and by them God seeks to come to us. They brought Naaman to the prophet in Israel, and made the lepers come to Christ. Afflictions made the prodigal remember his father's house, and prevented the apostle to be "lifted up above measure." By them the wicked often cease from troubling, and believers are drawn nearer to God. Ephraim, unaccustomed to the yoke, lifts up his heel against heaven; Israel, smitten and slain, returned and inquired after God; David's sweetest songs were composed in David's greatest troubles; "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

He knocks by His judgments. The prophet exclaims, "in the way of thy judgments have we waited for thee; in trouble have we visited thee; we poured forth a prayer, when thy chastening was upon us." Often He strikes at our neighbors door, warning us, except ye repent ye shall likewise perish." The clouds, which are gathering at a distance may soon break over our heads. Happy is the man who learns from the corrections of others, how to correct himself. When God's judgments are upon the earth, may the inhabitants learn righteousness.

He knocks by the law. This shows sin in its true nature and real features. It was originally given amongst thunder and lightning. It still strikes with irresistible power, and cuts its way with awful force. It reveals God's wrath, and declares God's justice. The apostle saith, "I was alive without the law once"—that is, I had a good opinion of the state of my soul, and saw myself in no danger; but when the law, in all its convincing power,

reached my soul, "I died," all my hopes vanished, all my high thoughts withered, and all my previous notions died. You are lost, you perish, and in this state you will also die, and remain for ever, as long as you keep Jesus Christ out of your heart, and refuse Him admission when He knocks.

He also knocks by the Gospel. This sets forth our blessed Saviour as the only means of our salvation—it exhibits the riches of His grace, the fulness of His redemption, and the sweetness of His love. To the weary He offers rest—the heavy-laden He will refresh. The naked He will clothe, the hungry He will feed. Sight He will give to the blind, and upon the poor He will pour the riches of His grace. If you refuse, you make Him weep; if you harden your hearts, you grieve His Spirit. The greatest misery He can remove, and the greatest compassion He is ready to shew.

Some may say, "we can do nothing; and why should we be required to perform that which is not in our power to do?" "It would be well if this was really believed. This is the great obstacle in the way of happiness. As long as we think that we have some strength of our own, we will not go to God for help. If we have lost the power of obeying, still God hath not lost His authority to demand. A sum of money lent, and afterwards lost, would not invalidate the claim. So we received and lost all in Adam; and though having lost the power to obey, yet God still claims the authority to demand, and nothing is impossible with God. By His word He heals the broken and contrite heart; and by His Spirit He now quickens souls dead in trespasses and sins. May this be 'the hour in which the dead among you shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.' May His voice reach you, as it reached Lazarus in

the grave, saying, ' Come forth; " and may His Holy Spirit quicken your life and sanctify your souls. Some may plant, and others may water; but it is God alone who can give the increase.

In conclusion, consider for what purpose, and to whom, you are to open your hearts. It is to Him who gave your lives, and shed His blood to save your souls. As the prophet prayed for his servant, that the Lord God would open his eyes, so it is my earnest petition that God should open your hearts. Receive Christ, and reserve no room for self and sin, If you open to Him, you shall have God and His fulness. You shall have on earth the riches of His grace, and in heaven an eternal weight of glory. He will be with you here. He will support you in death; and, oh! on that awful day, when heaven and earth shall pass away, and the whole system of the universe be dashed to thousand atoms, then, yea, then He will own you. Open to Him now, and this blessedness you will realize hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chapter 7

“The Lord rebuke thee.”

Sermon 7

*“Yet Michael the archangel, when
contending with the devil, (he
disputed about the body of Moses),
durst not bring against him a railing
accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke
thee.”*

— Jude 9.

THE apostle, after uttering his complaints against those filthy dreamers who despised dominion, and spake evil of dignities—great men whom God had raised in His Church—proceeds to compare their conduct towards men with the conduct of the archangel towards the devil. If Michael, who was by nature so excellent, and by office so exalted, when he was disputing with the devil, an evil and impious spirit, treats him with such leniency, how dare they, who are such mean, wretched creatures, treat with insolence and contempt persons placed in eminent stations, and

invested with sovereign power ? If the archangel, when engaged in a good cause, refrained from bringing any charges against the very devil himself, how dare they vent their rage, and curse men far superior and better than themselves ? The sum of the whole is this, if an angel of such worth and dignity refrained from bringing any railing accusation against the worst of beings, how dare bad men presume to revile those whom God hath put in authority either in Church or State. Having thus shown the apostles' mode of arguing, I proceed to consider the words more particularly, and to draw therefrom such words of instruction, as may, under the guidance of Divine grace, not only inform your understandings, but improve your hearts. The word "Michael," means, who is like unto God ? The learned differ in their opinions touching this exalted being. Some suppose him to be the second person in the ever-blessed Trinity. Others maintain that he is a created being of the highest order, whose station is near the throne of God, ready to receive and execute His maker's supreme commands. This supposition is strongly confirmed by a passage in the prophecy of Daniel, where he is styled "one of the chief princes." As Beelzebub is called the chief of the devils, so Michael is supposed to be the chief of the angels. The word "devil" signifies an accuser or slanderer. His first act after his fall was falsehood, and even denying that death would be the fruit of disobedience, and stating that God was afraid that our first parents should taste of the tree, lest they should become like unto Him, "for He doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

This work he still persists to do. Sometimes he slanders God's justice, insinuating that He will never inflict

the punishment denounced against sin in His holy law. At other times he represents God as utterly devoid of mercy, and with cunning malignity, softened and concealed under the cloak of sympathy, suggests, even to the penitent, that their sins are greater than can be forgiven. He employs every stratagem which falsehood, envy, and malice can effect, and uses every art which wickedness, treachery, and jealousy can devise, for cuffing off those whom God only intended to humble, and frustrate God's design in their salvation. He is also called in the Book of Revelation, the accuser of the brethren, who accuseth them before God day and night. He withstood Joshua the high-priest, standing before the angel. He charged Job with the love of self-interest, and not with the love of God, insinuating that if his wishes were once removed, his love would soon grow cold, and his service would soon cease. He makes every effort to condemn those whom the Lord hath acquitted. But the venom which he throws at them recoils upon himself, and the stratagems he employs for their destruction are overruled for their protection. With fearful audacity, he dares accuse the brethren before Him who sees through his falsehood, baseness, and injustice, and who will hereafter judge the accuser and pity the accused. He excites jealousy amongst men, and envy between brethren. By him Elijah is accused of troubling Israel, and our Saviour of being an enemy to Caesar. Resist, then, the devil, and trust in the Lord, "for He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as noon day. Christ is beyond his reach; but those who resemble Him the most, Satan tries to ensnare on their way home, and however much he succeeds, he can never prevent them reaching their journey's end.

He is also a deceiver, and often leads man to deceive himself. Every kind of deceit is both hateful and dangerous, but self-deceit should be most dreaded. 'Be ye doers of the work, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.' The Syrians imagined they were going to Dathan, whilst they were actually marching towards Samaria. There are still thousands imagining themselves going along the narrow path to heaven, whilst they are on the broad road to destruction. They use every means to hide all sins in themselves; and in others, whom they hate, they delight to mark what is done amiss.

From the conduct of Michael, as shown on this occasion, we should learn that the higher we are exalted the more humble we should be. No creature is higher than the archangel, and yet no creature is so low. None so vile as the devil, and yet none so proud. Humility is the ornament and the glory of the angels, but pride is the disgrace and deformity of devils, and if heaven would not retain a proud angel, it will never receive a proud soul. The more numerous are the gifts you receive, the greater should be the depth of your humility, for all you have you received from God; pride not yourselves upon the gifts, but give glory to the Giver—of this He is jealous, and declares that His glory He will not give to others, nor His praise to graven images. 'Watch and pray,' lest your pride be your destruction, and your glory end in shame.

From the archangel's contending with the devil about the body of Moses, we may learn that there is a contest between good and bad spirits concerning both temporal and spiritual matters. Good angels contend about the safety of the saints in this world, and, like a troop of armed soldiers, encamp round about them to deliver them." They keep them in their ways, and bear them in their

hands, lest at any time they dash their foot against a stone." They encamped around Elisha when he was surrounded by his enemies. And when "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man," he beheld "the mountain full of horses and chariots, round about Elisha." When Daniel had been cast into the lions' den, an angel closed the lions' mouths. When Jezebel sought Elijah's life, angels supplied his wants and cheered his solitude. But, on the other hand, Satan, with a host of evil spirits, goes about "seeking to devour "God's people, and hurl them to eternal destruction. His whole aim is to corrupt men's hearts, and to ruin their souls, He is their great enemy. It is his greatest pleasure to undermine their character, and injure their reputation, He stirred up Jannes and Jambres to withstand Moses. He became a lying spirit in the mouth of Baal's prophets. He sowed tares in that field where good seed had been sown. He hindered Paul on his journeys, and cast saints into prison. In every are, and in everyplace, this contest between Christ and the devil—between holiness and sin—is going on. Angels are engaged in the conflict, and men are interested in the issue. With man it is often an inward struggle, with angels a continual contest; good angels carolled the Messiah's birth, when evil spirits sought to slay Him in his infancy. The devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, but angels came and ministered to His wants. They desire to look into the mysteries of the Gospel, and rejoice in the conversion of one sinner. The contest which is fiercely waged between these armies of the sky, exists also between the graces of the one and the crimes of the other, virtue and vice are contrary to each other, and sin and holiness can never co-exist—sin hates holiness, and holiness cannot endure sin. Sin is as loathsome to grace, as

grace is hateful to sin. It is “ the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and they are contrary the one to the other.”

Believers may hence learn that as long as they continue holy, they can expect no rest. In the world they shall have tribulation. They must bear with insults, slander, and persecution; they must not be discouraged at the reproaches of men, nor be dismayed at the attacks of Satan;—neither is a bad symptom. It was the treatment which angels received, and the very same reception was given unto the Son of God. Let them alone; their scoff is no scandal, and Satan’s buffetings are no signs of God’s hatred. When he sallies forth in his great strength against us, the Archangel will enter into the contest, and the great Captain of our salvation will stand up in our defence. “ If God be for us, who can be against us ? “ Though heavenly hosts rank on our side, and their service they have always rendered unto the children of God. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.” These may be little in faith, little in their own esteem, and little in the eyes of the world, yet they are great in the sight, of the angels of God. They see in them the heirs of salvation, and esteem it all honour to render them any service, for, are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them ? “ It is not said they were, but they are, even now encamping around God’s people, as faithful sentinels, to guard their charge, and continue their watch till all dangers finally cease, and until they safely reach their home.

Michael disputed about the body of Moses. The only account recorded of Moses’ burial is found in Deut. xxxiv. 6, where it is said, “He buried him in a valley, in the land

of Moab; but no man knoweth of the sepulchre unto this day." From this passage it is evident that the Lord buried him. Whether He commanded the angels to dig his grave, or the earth to open its mouth to receive his body, is not known; yet it is certain that he was buried; and it is supposed that the devil was desirous to be present, that he might see where the corpse was deposited, in order that the Israelites might be induced to resort to the spot, and make him an object of idolatry; but Michael withstood him, and frustrated his intentions. Hence we may learn that the devil's sole object is to lead men astray, in the paths of sin. As it is our Lord's design to promote our growth in grace, so is it Satan's aim to ruin our souls, and make us more like unto himself. His object in the case of Job was to lead him to impatience and distrust. He was not so much for depriving him of his wealth, as he was for sifting his grace. Satan," saith Christ to Peter, "hath desired to have you, that he might, sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He aims at the Christian's deeds more than at his person or possessions. He employs every artifice to check the Christian's growth in grace, and nothing is so sweet to him as the death of souls. As the best of men are the objects of his attacks, so the best thing they have—even their graces and their souls—are the objects of his gain.

When Michael disputed with the devil about the body of Moses, he durst not bring a railing accusation against him. When by accident or temptation we are thrown in the devil's way, it is yet a great blessing to be kept from sin. Michael contends with the devil, yet he is still holy. Our Saviour was tempted by him in the wilderness, but He remained still undefiled. The strength of God's grace is made more manifest when you remain

untainted amongst corruption, than when you shun the society of the wicked. It is a great blessing if you can mix with the world, and yet not being of the world. To do this effectually, first examine your own faults, and inspect your own heart. The nearest enemy is the worst enemy—your sins lie in your bosom. Let them also be the most odious in your sight. May also God's love influence your hearts, for as "love thinketh no evil," so truly; it speaketh no evil. Envy and malice invent mischief; but "love covers a multitude of sins." Entreat the Lord ' 'to set a watch over your mouth," and resolve, with David, not to offend with your tongue." Recompense to no man evil for evil," but bless, and curse not." Let the door of your lips be so sealed that it cannot be open by any provocation; and let your neighbour's name be regarded as your own. If you permit his name to be slandered in your presence, your reputation will share the same fate, for with "what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

"He durst not." From this expression we may learn that the grace of God is not only a restraint from sin, but a strong defence against sin. As long as you fear God, you need not heed man. Sanctify the Lord wholly in your hearts, and He will be your tower of defence in the day of evil. Choose rather to suffer every ridicule for your sanctity, than to be condemned for your sin, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil," and this fear constrains us not only to abstain from outward sin, but inwardly to hate sin. It will not only bind our hands, but it will also change our hearts. The fear of man may make us hide our sins, but the fear of God makes us to loathe them. They who tremble at God's word, shall ever smart under God's rod. Godly fear is the spring, whence, through God's grace, issues the Christian's hope. Noah, through fear, built the ark, and

rested' in the days of trouble. A railing accusation is a sin strictly forbidden in the word of God, and it was severely punished in the time of the prophet Elisha, when there came two bears out of the wood and tore forty and two children in Bethel." By railing at others we injure our own selves. Railing is a deadly poison, which produces fatal mortification, causing division and hatred amongst even brethren—who, before the tale-bearer came in, dwelt together in peace and unity. The railer sins against God, injures his neighbour, and is a sad enemy to himself. Whilst he wounds others, he poisons his own soul; and in blasting his neighbour's fame, he exposes his own folly.

Solomon saith, that he who uttereth slander is a fool," and seems utterly inconsistent with the spirit of true religion. ' If any among you seems to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.' " The poison of asps is under his lips, and with his tongue he cuts as with a sharp razor."

It is probable that Satan roared, his mouth being full of blasphemies, for it is said, that he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them who dwelt in heaven." But Michael was of another spirit. He avenged not himself, but left it to Him to whom it belonged. " Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it, saith the Lord." This should teach us patience and meekness under all provocations. ' For even hereunto we are called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we may follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously. " Learn hence, meekness, for Jesus does not require of you to learn to create a world,

to walk on the sea, to feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, to cleanse the lepers, to give sight to the blind, to hush the wind, to heal diseases, or to cast out devils, but to learn meekness. "Learn of me," saith He, for I am meek and lowly in heart." He was "the Lamb of God," so ought we to be—lambs, not lions; sheep, not wolves. If we bite and devour one another, we should take heed that we should not consume one another."

Michael delivered Satan into the hands of God, that He might rebuke him; and his conduct conformed with the spirit of the Scripture, which enjoins us not to say, 'I will recompense evil; I will do unto him as he hath done unto me; "but to "wait on the Lord, and He will save us." Pray for thine enemy, and forgive thy brother." Remember our Savior's prayer on the cross, Father, forgive them, for they know not, what they do." Return good for evil, and love them that hate you. Weary them with your patience, and follow the example of your God.

Chapter 8

“Desire The Sincere Milk of The Word”

Sermon 8

*As new born babes, desire the sincere milk
of the Word, that ye may grow.*

— 1 Peter 2:2

THIS Scripture contains an affectionate address to believing Jews, entreating them to grow in faith, and give due attention to God's Word, as the means whereby that growth is promoted. The apostle exhorts them to hunger and thirst for that Word of God, which is the food and nourishment of the soul, in the same manner as babes cry for their mother's breast, whose milk feeds and nourishes them. The words allude to two kinds of birth, one earthly and natural, implying that birth from our first parents, through whom, original sin, like the poison of an asp, hath defiled the whole human race: the other is heavenly and spiritual, implying that birth which is of God, through whom grace and holiness nourish and sanctify our souls. In this last birth, God is our Father to

beget us, the Church is our mother to give us birth. The Word of God is the means whereby we are begotten; the ministers Of the Gospel are they who feed us, and the Gospel itself is that breast which yields nourishment to our souls. We shall here state—

I. The qualification required of those who wish to grow in grace, “ They must be as new born babes.”

II. The first act of the mind in babes, “ They desire.”

III. What are we to desire, “The milk of the word.”

IV. What kind of milk, “The sincere milk of the word.”

V. The object in view for desiring this milk of the word, “ That we may grow thereby.”

I. The qualification required of those who wish to grow in grace, “ They must be as new born babes.”

We know that babes are innocent, simple, and harmless. This also should be the character of all who would be instructed in the Word of God, or be enlightened and comforted by the preaching of the Gospel. We must be converted, and become as little children, before we can ever enter into the kingdom of G Oil. They who would have the Lord Jesus to reveal unto them His will, must be cleansed from all iniquity and sin. For as Satan will not dwell in a house where true religion reigns, so the Spirit of God will not long dwell in any habitation which is not swept, cleansed, and garnished. As long as we do not desire new hearts, we cannot expect new blessings, our preaching and your hearing will be all in vain, unless the veil of sin be removed, and the light of the Gospel shine in

our hearts. If you wish that the Lord would bless your hearing, and give success to our preaching, you must cast off the dregs of sin which sour your souls, and the rust of sin which corrupts your heart, lest, instead of a blessing, you receive a curse, and lest the Word of God, which should be a savor of life unto life, should be the savor of death unto death. As the unbelief of the Jews prevented Christ from working many miracles among them, so the bosom sins of your hearts quench His Spirit, and close, as it were, His mouth. The prophet's counsel was ' 'to break up the fallow ground, and not to sow among thorns," that is, among those worldly cares that spring up and choke the plants of instruction and truth. To see the diligence of the husbandman, and perceive the carelessness of the Christian, causes a good man to be grieved in his inmost soul. He may see many going up to the house of God with an evil spirit in their hearts, and many coming out with the curse of God upon their heads. Many spend more time to adorn their bodies, to appear before men, than they employ in prayer to sanctify their souls, and prepare to come before God. Abhor these sinful practices, and long to be, not only as little children, but as little babes, having new hearts, new members, new desires, and a new life ingrafted in your souls. Abstain not only from one sin, but from all appearance of evil, so as to become other men, or new creatures in Christ Jesus. If you be attentive hearers, put away from you your lusts and passions, and come as little children to hear the Word of God. And if you would hear profitably, be simple as little children, free from all prejudices, and separated from all sin. Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and, like new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.

II. The first act of the mind in babes—to desire.

We are not to be like wavering children, 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,' neither are we to be children in knowledge and understanding. "Brethren," saith the apostle, be not children in understanding, howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men." Neither, then, in understanding nor knowledge are we to be children, but as new born babes we are to desire the sincere milk of the Word. "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." God satisfieth the hungry with good things, and the rich He sends empty away. When we are fervent in spirit, and feel an actual desire and thirst after God's Word, we may certainly conclude that we have a new life and a new spirit in us, and that every spark of religion is not, utterly gone out, and that we are not wholly dead. It would be the same thing to desire the dead to quit their graves, as to see those dead in trespasses and sin—desiring not the Word of truth—leave their sins and save their souls. Many imagine the Word can give life of itself, and hence seek not the Spirit of God, who creates the new birth and nourishes the new souls. They complain of the length of the service, and are best pleased with the shortest prayer, forgetting the sentiments of those saints who "delighted in the law of the Lord, and in His law meditated day and night," who "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day;" they have no relish for God's Word, and evince no anxiety for the salvation of their own souls. As new born babes cry for the mother's breast as soon as they are born, so should Christians, as

soon as they hear of a new and another life, hunger and thirst after the milk of the Word. A child who was not fed could not live for three days, much less can our faith subsist without being fed and nourished by the bread of life. Our Lord commanded that something should be given to eat to Jairus' daughter, as soon as He had raised her from the dead, intimating that in vain we be revived by God's finger unless we are fed by the Word of His grace. When God quickens us by His Spirit, and we experience His grace implanted in our hearts, we should water it, lest it be scorched up like the seed which fell on the rocky ground, and withered away. We deem it a great miracle that Elijah lived forty days without food, but it is a matter of greater astonishment that souls should exist forty years without tasting of the bread of life. As our Lord was sent for to heal the ruler's daughter when she was at the point of death, so many will not seek the prayers of God's ministers until they are arrested by the hand of death. They wish to die the death of the righteous, though they have lived the lives of the wicked; they now seek for repentance whose offers they had before despised; they delay building the ark until they are overtaken with the deluge. Lot tarried in Sodom, until, in a manner, the angels forced him to depart; and in truth, if God does not pluck us as brands out of the burning fire by His grace, and by His Spirit remove the veil of ignorance and darkness from our souls, none can be saved. Wherefore, if ye have been planted in the true faith, see that ye are also watered, for the best gifts will soon decay if they be not moistened by the dew of heaven. As children, eager for food, are deaf to all excuses until they are satisfied, so, in like manner, it is not enough for you to desire

the Word, but you should be earnest and importunate in your prayers, that it should be ingrafted in your hearts that ye may grow thereby. “ The word of Christ should dwell in us richly. “ It is not enough that it should remain for a while, and then to depart, but it must abide daily and continually in our hearts. It should be the food of our souls, morning, noon, and night. Though the ground may be good, yet it still needs the former and the latter rain, before it can ever bring forth much fruit. Some imagine that one shower, one sermon, or one prayer, will abundantly water their souls. Not so, brethren, ye must strive to enter in at the strait gate. As new born babes, ye must desire the sincere milk of the Word, immediately, without delay; incessantly, without weariness; cheerfully, without murmuring; constantly, without ceasing; and perseveringly, unto the end.

III. What we are to desire—the milk of the Word—that is, our food and sustenance in Christ Jesus.

For this we are to labour more than for any other food. Thus our Saviour commands. Labour not,” saith He, “ for the meat which perisheth: but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” And although “the Word of God endureth for ever,” and is the “ incorruptible seed “ which preserves from famine and death, yet we desire many things before it. There is a carnal desire which wars against the soul—there is a desire of money, which is the root of all evil. There is a desire of retaliation, which springs from the spirit of revenge, and a, desire of praise, which springs from pride; but few have the real desire for

the sincere Word of truth. Among the many blessings wherewith the land of Canaan abounded, the chief was, that it flowed with milk and honey; “but the Word of God abounds with far greater treasures, bears higher titles, and holds out far greater promises. It is a “lamp to guide our feet, and a light unto our path.” It is a medicine to heal our wounds, and a bridle to check our pride. It is a milk to nourish, and a wine to cheer. It is a sword to defend us on our journey home, and a key to open to us the gate of heaven. And as Elisha said unto Naaman concerning Jordan, “Wash in it and be clean,” so may we say to all respecting the Word of God, “Feed on it, and live for ever.” It is the golden chain which brings God and man together. It gives hope to the cast down, and imparts strength to the weary. It refreshes the heavy-laden, and gives eternal life to all believers. It speaks peace to the conscience. It gladdens the heart, it consoles the spirit, and gives inexpressible joy in believing. Despise not the Word of God, for by it you now live, and by it you will be judged in the last day.

IV. Its nature and quality.

It is called the sincere milk of the word.” It is as milk in its natural state—not mixed with any error, nor soured by any prejudice. And as our Saviour admonishes us “how we hear,” so the apostle warns us to take heed what we hear.” For as there is a doctrine full of purity and truth, so also there is a doctrine full of leaven and malice. There is a communication which ministers grace to the hearers, and there is a communication that corrupts good manners. There is a word that edifies, and there is a word that eats like a canker. There is a teaching of God, and

there are doctrines of devils. And as it was once said, "There is death in the pot," so it may be also said, there is death in the food; and for this reason, we are so often enjoined in Scripture to beware of false prophets, who come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly not better than ravening wolves;" and not to "believe every spirit, but that we try the spirits, whether they be of God." Many, like the prodigal son, feed upon the husks of the swine : hear they do, but to no good : driven about by many winds of doctrine, but neither grow in grace nor increase in knowledge. Truth can have no fellowship with error. Take heed lest unscriptural doctrines corrupt your heart, and ruin your souls. To pretend to be worshipping God at church in the morning, and carousing at the public-house in the evening, cannot less than produce a canker in your bosom which must end in your death.

V. And last place. We will consider the end in view for thus desiring the sincere milk of the word, —that we may grow thereby.

The design, then, is, that we may grow in grace, grow in faith, and grow in righteousness. Believers are called "the trees of righteousness," intimating that they grow. They are also called faithful servants, who trade with their Lord's talents, that they may receive their own with usury. We are not always to be children, but we must henceforth "increase in stature, till we come to the fulness of Christ. We should walk forward in the path of duty, until we come to the full fruition of God. We must advance from grace to grace. We must not only go and hear the Word of God, but we must needs profit by our hearing. We should be more zealous, more faithful, and more active for the

truth, than we have been in the past. We must be more holy, more fervent, and more diligent in religion in the future. It is to be feared that many who have long ago heard the Word, are yet still of little faith, of little love, of little patience, and of little humility, that they have not yet seen Christ. Nay, several are still as dishonest towards their neighbors, as they are negligent in the service of God, as proud in their hearts, as hypocritical at their church, and as sinful at their home, as they have ever been. The reason is, they hear the Word, but they do not grow thereby. But be assured, brethren, that it would have been better for you not to have heard, than not to profit thereby. If the servant who hid his talent in the ground, was cast into outer darkness, of what punishment shall they be counted worthy, who spend their talents upon their own pleasure? We should take heed what we hear, lest we receive the grace of God in vain. We should not only hear, read, mark, and learn, but inwardly digest it, that we may grow thereby. If ye are desirous of a blessing on the Word of God, be sure to look up unto the Lord, and direct your prayer unto Him, to preserve you in the spiritual conflict in which you are about to engage. Separate yourselves from sinners whilst you seek for light to walk the narrow road; and when circumstances call you into their society, let your conversation resemble that of the two disciples. You may then hope that Jesus may be in your company. Do not deem it sufficient to be found within the walls of the church, but seek also to see Jesus there, that the word of salvation may effectually come to your heart. Beware, lest, while ye tread His courts," you bring vain oblations—an incense which is an abomination unto the Lord. Take heed that the sacred flame which hath been kindled in your heart be not put out by your

sin, but let your prayer be a real burnt-offering unto the Lord—a service acceptable in His sight, improve your talents. Be ye doers of the Word, that may you grow in grace, and may your graces be multiplied through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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